

V I S U A L I S I N G T H E M I D D L E A G E S



Images of Medieval Sanctity

Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson

EDITED BY

Debra Higgs Strickland

BRILL



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LEIDEN • BOSTON
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On the cover: Cimabue, Saint Francis (detail of Madonna and Child with Angels), c. 1280. Assisi, Basilica S. Francesco. Photo: © 1999, Photo Scala, Florence

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INTRODUCTION:
RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND CHARISMATIC POWER
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

André Vauchez

For a long time, the religious history of medieval Christendom was identified with that of church institutions: the papacy, councils, episcopate, monastic and religious orders, parish authorities, pastoral visits, synod statutes, and still others. Such an approach, bearing the mark of legal historians, brought into being works strong on synthesis, some of which have retained their usefulness to this day.¹ However, this approach has its disadvantages: it places emphasis on the structural and administrative side of religious life and sometimes freezes changing realities into abstract or restraining patterns. Between 1950 and 1970, Gabriel Le Bras and Bernard Guillemain—to name only French historians—are to be credited with giving a new dimension to the history of the structures of the central and local government of the Church by treating them as social organisms with rather multifarious recruitment techniques but common outlook and behaviour.² From 1970 onwards, the interest in the history of mental habits and the taste of a growing number of scholars for anthropology triggered the tremendous growth—still notable today—of the history of religious practices, especially among laymen. The result has been that within a generation, the history of the Church, in the classical meaning, has been replaced by the history of religious experience, stressing the study of the ways in which the ‘Christian people’ express and manifest their sensibilities.³

¹ One thinks of the volumes on the Middle Ages by Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin, *Histoire de l’Eglise*, 20 vols. (Paris, 1942–1964); Jean François Lemarignier, Jean Gaudemet and Guillaume Mollat, *Institutions ecclésiastiques* (Paris, 1962); and *Histoire des institutions françaises au Moyen Age*, ed. Ferdinand Lot and Robert Fawtier, vol. 3, *Institutions ecclésiastiques* (Paris, 1958).

² See Fliche and Martin, *Histoire de l’Eglise*, vol. 12; Gabriel Le Bras, *Institutions ecclésiastiques de la chrétienté médiévale* (Paris, 1959); and Bernard Guillemain, *La cour pontificale d’Avignon (1309–1374)* (Paris, 1962).

³ See Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1935; 2d ed., Darmstadt, 1961); Raoul Manselli, *La religion populaire au Moyen Age: problèmes de méthode et d’histoire* (Paris, 1975); Étienne Delaruelle, *La piété populaire au Moyen Age* (Torino,

One of the basic features of this fundamentally renewed questioning in religious history consisted in switching the starting point from church institution to ‘popular religion’, a long-discussed phrase eventually accepted for lack of a better one. Popular religion is a double concept. On the one hand, it comprises a number of individual and collective religious practices pertaining to simple piety, including the cult of saints and relics, pilgrimages, the founding of perpetual chantries, and participation in religious brotherhoods. On the other hand, it also includes the vast motions of crowds as well as “panic impulses”—to quote Alphonse Dupront—spreading like a shock-wave over the whole region, a country, or several countries, such as the First Crusade or the processions of flagellants marching across Europe in 1348 and 1349.⁴ Besides Dupront, whose work is little-known outside France because of his impenetrable style and on account of its belated publication, one must of course acknowledge Norman Cohn, whose major book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, first published in 1957 but revised and enlarged later, had great influence in spite of a somewhat weak treatment of medieval documents and of a propensity to explain religious phenomena in light of social tensions.⁵ To Cohn’s mind, the collective outbreak of religious emotion in medieval and modern times constitutes “the combined product” of social dislocation and apocalyptic belief, and bore the mark of “collective enthusiasm of the poor and the disoriented rooted in crisis, messianism and revolutionary apocalypticism” ultimately aimed at a complete overturn of the social order.⁶

However stimulating it may have been in its day, this interpretation of medieval religious movements was bound to trigger considerable reservation, from both methodological and interpretive perspectives, and indeed did so rapidly. As Gary Dickson wrote with acumen, “Cohn’s argument bathes the full range of medieval Latin enthusiasm in a false light of impending social upheaval. . . Not all its manifestations were overt (or covert) movements of social protest, as they include for instance peace

1975); Rosalind B. Brooke and Christopher Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages* (London, 1984).

⁴ Alphonse Dupront, *La chrétienté et l’idée de croisade*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1954–1959); idem, *Du sacré: Croisades et pèlerinages, images et langages* (Paris, 1987). On the flagellant movements, see also Mitchell Merback’s chapter in this volume.

⁵ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (1957; rev. and enl. ed., London, 1970).

⁶ Gary Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West: Revivals, Crusades, Saints* (Aldershot, 2000), p. ix.

movements and officially sanctioned crusades.⁷ Besides—last but not least—there is no evidence that all the popular religious movements of the Middle Ages were under the influence of millenarianism or apocalyptic prospects. Norman Cohn along with Herbert Grundmann, Raoul Manselli, Etienne Delaruelle, and Christopher Brooke brought historical research forward a good step in pointing at the importance of mass upheavals and collective outbursts of fervour or revolt in the religious life of the closing centuries of the Middle Ages; but they have also driven it up blind alleys when submitting these movements to readings based on rather sketchy Marxism and mob psychology.

Then came Gary Dickson. From 1980 onwards, he began publishing a series of very detailed studies based on a thorough knowledge of medieval sources and international bibliography, and centred on the most significant episodes of what he called ‘religious enthusiasm’, an original concept that led him to state that “religious enthusiasm, whatever its varied manifestations, constituted a distinctive, identifiable and significant strand in medieval Christianity . . . one of Christianity’s most characteristic expressive forms.”⁸ With this notion he associated another, with a roughly similar content although more sociological in character, that of ‘revivalism’, as in the title, “Studies in Medieval Revivalism,” chosen for his collection of studies devoted to the ‘Children’s Crusades’ of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, as well as to the Perugian and Italian flagellant movements.⁹ According to Dickson,

medieval revivals were collective enthusiasms; initially orthodox in intent; responsive to crisis; welcoming to prophecy; conversionary in nature; perceived as ‘extraordinary’—marked, that is, by the miraculous, the charismatic, the astonishment of observers; behaviourally varied; archetypically tripartite (crowd, movement, and eventually institutionalized sect, order or confraternity) and generally unpredictable in outcome.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. x.

⁹ Gary Dickson: “Charisma and Revivalism in the Thirteenth Century”; “The Genesis of the Children’s Crusade (1212)”; “Stephen of Cloyes, Philip Augustus, and the Children’s Crusade of 1212”; “The Advent of the *Pastores* (1251)”; “The Flagellants of 1260 and the Crusades”; articles II, IV, V, VI, VIII, respectively, in Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm*.

¹⁰ Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm*, article I: “Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West and the Second Conversion of Europe,” p. 6.

But far from dwelling on the detailed analysis of the various trends that expressed, at the close of the Middle Ages, this religious enthusiasm and these tendencies to renewal; Dickson's reflections from 1990 on took on a more systematic turn as demonstrated by the title of his collected studies, *Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West* (2000) and his most recent articles, in which he emphasizes the charismatic nature of these 'revivals' and of the men who launched them.¹¹ Most of the movements partake of what Dickson calls a "quasi-mystic marriage between charismatic leaders and religious crowds." He notes among the elements of success of some of them, such as St. Francis of Assisi, their "fervent or ecstatic personality," their "preacher's gift for words of evangelical power" as well as their reputation as prophets.¹² At this point, our paths could not but cross on intellectual and personal levels in our work on sainthood in the West in relation to canonization processes. We concurred that the cult of saints had become of prime import in thirteenth and fourteenth century Christendom, and was first and foremost at stake in power struggles: the control of new forms and expressions of sainthood, which the papacy attempted systematically to achieve beginning with Innocent III, was a means of doing away with 'spurious' saints (impostors, quacks, deviants, heretics) but also of directing popular enthusiasm towards models and men consistent with Roman orthodoxy, such as the founders of the two large mendicant orders, the preacher and theologian Anthony of Padua, and the inquisitor Peter Martyr.¹³ We were on common ground—and still are—in our conviction in the historical significance of sainthood and also, on a larger scale, of the importance—long underestimated among historians—of the charismatic or supernatural power in the religious life of men and women in the Middle Ages. It gives me great pleasure to have a chance, in this symposium, to continue the interesting and friendly earlier discussions we had in Edinburgh and Erice.

When it comes to religious matters, the notion of power cannot be restricted to constitutions, however powerful and extensive they may have been. Even at the time of the Avignon papacy, as the administrative cogs of the Church and papal court achieved extraordinary intricacy and their influence reached over the whole of Western Christendom,

¹¹ See, for instance, Gary Dickson, "Revivalism as a Medieval Religious Genre," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000), 971–96.

¹² Dickson, "Charisma and Revivalism," p. 6.

¹³ André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997).

there were other forces—perhaps less evident but nevertheless not to be overlooked—linked with a supernatural power either possessed or claimed. One may wonder at a contrast between the religious and the supernatural: was not the superiority of clergy over laymen, stated vigorously once more by Boniface VIII in 1296 in the *Clericis laicos* bull, linked with their greater familiarity with the sacred? Yet, there was an important turn at the close of the Middle Ages, as Peter Brown has demonstrated: whereas, in the high Middle Ages, the supernatural was likely to be considered a set of discontinuous realities remote from daily life, from the thirteenth century it began to evolve into a pledge of intense personal involvement and the fulfilment of individual experience.¹⁴ In point of fact, from 1300 onwards, the Church institution, in the role of managing the sacred it had so far somehow carried out, found itself in competition with various figures—holy women, visionaries, prophets, mystics—who had no regard for established hierarchies. It was also confronted with proliferating sacred representations—pious images, multifarious visions—whose authentic or miraculous nature was ever more difficult to assert.

What indeed was the true nature of such supernatural power? It corresponds to a large extent with what Max Weber termed ‘charismatic power’.¹⁵ The German sociologist has revealed alongside constitutional powers embodied in most Western societies in Church and State the existence of another form of power bearing, according to him, the seal of creativity: that of prophets capable of raising crowds—indeed, a whole population—to outbursts of religious enthusiasm. In his view, the prophet “bears charismatic features all of his own and, owing to his mission, proclaims a religious doctrine or a commandment from God.”¹⁶ Unlike a priest who is in charge of a sacred tradition and metes out the benefits of salvation by virtue of his ministry, the prophet affirms that his authority emanates from a divine call or a revelation which may appear either under the form of clairvoyance in the present or the future, or as specific power over demons or evil forces. Generally speaking, however, a prophet will stay away from magic and rather will

¹⁴ Peter Brown, “Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change,” *Daedalus* 104 (1975), 133–51.

¹⁵ Max Weber, *Économie et société*, trans. J. Freud (Paris, 1968), pp. 464–90. See also Jean Martin Ouedraogo, “La réception de la sociologie du charisme de Max Weber,” *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 83 (1993), 141–57.

¹⁶ Weber, *Économie et société*, p. 464.

try to gain recognition through morally exemplary behaviour and the appeal of his or her message. The main objective, to be sure, is to bend the conduct of others so as to lead them surely to salvation, an objective that can bring the prophet, in some cases, to behave as “an utterly independent demagogue whose aim is to replace traditional priestly grace with systematic conviction ethics” and to attempt, together with lay followers, an ‘emotional community’ favourable to the execution of his or her program.¹⁷ However, as Weber makes clear, the power of the prophet is precarious and the fickle crowd—ready to set on fire one day what it had adored the day before—will let institutions get the better of it.

The way Max Weber sets the prophet against the priest, the man of God against the man of the cloth, is still valid at least in principle, even though one may regret its overly systematic nature. The sociologist had in fact anticipated some objections when admitting that a priest—he probably had Savonarola in mind—could also hear the call and enjoy personal charisma. In that case, he would argue, the priest drew his legitimacy from his function within the institution. Weber’s real prophet could only be a layperson who seized a power never intended for this purpose and who based his or her authority on the adhesion of followers, themselves largely mere members of a congregation.

However productive these concepts may have been, one cannot but admit that they leave historians of today unsatisfied, insofar as they do not allow full comprehension of the phenomena they are trying to study. The opposition between priest and prophet, already extant in the Bible, constitutes to be sure an essential fact and a permanent source of tension in Judeo-Christianity. But it must not be unduly stiffened or made too systematic: Gary Dickson acutely remarked that preaching, generally the work of priests, is indeed “a potentially charismatic office” and that medieval texts often describe crowds that followed preachers from one city to the next to hear their sermons or to define the power they had of modifying at will the communal statutes of a given city where their message had induced a deep emotion among their audiences.¹⁸ Moreover, the difference between priestly power and charismatic power depends less on the signs which render them visible than on their origin, namely the priest and even more the bishop. The medieval priest

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 479–89.

¹⁸ Dickson, “Charisma and Revivalism,” pp. 3, 15–16.

and even more so, the bishop, were in the position to work miracles through the practice of exorcism, the imposition of hands on the sick or quite simply by the sacrifice of the Eucharist. From the point of view of the Church, such capacity had no relation to their personal merits but resulted from the powers it had bestowed on them through the sacrament of orders. True to the Roman tradition, in emphasizing the distinction between office and incumbent, the Church asserted both the permanent character of priestly power and the fact that its supernatural efficacy was not called into question by the insufficiencies or the sins of those in charge. But alongside this institutional mediation were other mediators between this world and the next which, in the minds of laypeople, often gave a clearer picture of this function insofar as their power proceeded from divine inspiration. Among the latter were the prophets, in the full meaning of the word, but also the saints, the visionaries, and the mystics.

Much has been said in the last twenty years on the powers of the saints, an ambiguous designation with various significations according to circumstances.¹⁹ It may refer to “a cold and deliberate manipulation of the sacred” in favour of church or political powers as well as the virtues attached to a man of God or his mortal remains “which subdued the powerful and the humble alike” and was “the only thing capable of uniting men in a common political project.”²⁰ To me, the opposition between these two conceptions is somewhat artificial since the first one implies the existence of the second one: the recuperation by any institution of the sacred prestige of a man or woman makes sense only in a society where sainthood is considered the utmost form of human achievement and the source of a power akin to the supernatural. Conversely, it was all-important for authorities or social groups eager to be recognized as legitimate to have their worldly or spiritual demands guaranteed by supernatural characters or phenomena without any mandatory hypocritical or underhand manipulation by those who had a more or less artificial connection with a divine protector.

To the members of a congregation, at any rate, a saint was first and foremost a patron and a thaumaturge, and the very objects of his

¹⁹ See for instance André Vauchez, *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires: Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1999).

²⁰ Luce Pietri, “Culte des saints et religiosité politique en Gaule,” in *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (III^e–XIII^e siècle)*, Collection de l’Ecole française de Rome 149 (Rome, 1991), p. 369.

passion—his specific attributes—made up both the signs and the source of his power. As Franco Cardini justly remarked,

It is thanks to the arrows that pierce him that the holy Sebastian has become the supreme protector against epidemics and it is thanks to their teeth, eyes and torn breasts that Apollonia and Agatha could protect their followers against diseases affecting these organs. Lucy did not end up protecting eyesight because she was a saint and therefore a mediator between the human species and God, but became a saint on account of her protecting and curing human eyesight.²¹

The theological discourse is simple and straightforward: the saint refers to God, the only source of his or her powers. But in popular lore, ambiguity and a suspicion of idolatry were still present at the close of the Middle Ages and even later in such a way that the Protestant Reformation chose to uproot the cult of saints rather than to purify it.

To be sure, supernatural or charismatic power in principle sets itself against institutional powers but during the Middle Ages they rarely confront each other openly. Generally speaking, the latter occupy the foremost position whereas the former acts discretely backstage. Let us be clear: we are not dealing with contrary entities but rather with two poles that generate a permanent dialectical tension whose intensity varies according to fields of interest and periods. Even during the eleventh century, the pope had tried his best to reintegrate the Holy Spirit into the institution, urging the clergy to reform, so that holiness would not turn into a weapon against the Church in the hands of dissidents and heretics, but would permeate the various forms of church ministry. There is nothing excessive in viewing in that way the steps taken, particularly from the pontificate of Gregory VII, to render celibacy mandatory for the secular clergy as well as Innocent III's and the Fourth Lateran Council's endeavours to make the priest the necessary mediator between the congregation and the realm of the divine. Along with this, however, the Church hierarchy succeeded in retaining its hold over the community during difficult periods, such as the beginning of the thirteenth century, with its strong pressure of heresy, only by acknowledging the claims of religious revival movements that had grown spontaneously among laypeople and by granting

²¹ Franco Cardini, "Santi del paradiso e santi della terra," in *Storia dei santi e della santità cristiana*, 11 vols., ed. André Vauchez, et al. (Rome, 1990), 1:4.

some of their leaders a place in the institutions so as not to be cut off from the aspiration to renewal visible in many sectors. Thus, Gregory IX could catch for the benefit of the Roman Church the wave of religious fervour created by the testimony of the evangelical life and holy conduct of the poor man in Assisi. But the moment the Church hierarchy—evolving as it was towards bureaucratic centralism and the stifling legalism typical of the thirteenth century—lost the ability to welcome that it still possessed under Innocent III, there was a spontaneous growth of dissenting religious movements, such as the Shepherds' Crusades (1249–1250 and 1321) and the flagellant movements (1260, 1348–1350, 1399). There was also an uncontrollable proliferation of visions, revelations, and prophecies received and conveyed in most cases by laywomen who claimed they were speaking in God's name. The Avignon popes remained impervious to such expectations. The Council of Vienne (1311–1312) as well as John XXII's pontificate, with the numerous sentences passed by this pope, signal on the part of the Church a break with charismatic trends which were to reappear as soon as the Great Schism (1378–1415) and the conciliar crisis had weakened the papacy.

This alternation of tolerance and repression of outbursts of popular religious enthusiasm ultimately proceeded from a contradiction deep-rooted in Christian ideology which then permeated society: the Church conveyed a concept of authority based on hierarchy and that the sovereign—pope, emperor, king—was the representative of God here below, but its ultimate reference was sanctity. Appealing, at least briefly and as an exception, to those deprived of authority and of the Word, this concept was justified in a religion in which one of the founding texts—the *Magnificat*—stresses that God “overthrows the powerful” and “elevates the meek” without stating precisely whether such promises had to be postponed to the hereafter. In such a religious climate, it is not surprising that the very absence of power—or, even more, the renouncing of power—constituted for some a source of great supernatural prestige to which numerous hermits and voluntary poor testify, such as Celestine V or Saint Louis of Anjou. As Gary Dickson remarked, such ambivalence, which Christianity had inherited from Judaism, explains the uncertainties in some medieval sources: in describing the Shepherds' or Children's Crusades, many religious chroniclers alternate from one page to the next between tender emotion and exasperated calls for repression the minute the protesting *minores*, who had initially

appealed to them, might threaten the supremacy of the *maiores* within the Church and society.²²

Supernatural or charismatic power does not exist of itself as an abstract entity, nor can it be defined as an immutable reality. There is no arguing that the Western world between the thirteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century was subjected to a process of growing formalization and institutionalization of the ruling powers which resulted in reducing everything exterior to the system to secondary rank and more precisely, to ballast.²³ In his stimulating book, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, Alexander Murray describes the successive stages of such a victory of logical order and computational spirit.²⁴ At the close of the Middle Ages, droves of lawyers, administrators, and theologians stormed the irrational and there is no denying a hardening of the institutions towards the champions of the 'inspired word'. Until the beginning of the fourteenth century, clashes between the two forms of power had been the exception: Marguerite Porète, sentenced and burned at the stake in 1311 for having challenged clerks and doctors in the name of her mystic vision and her personal relationship with God, remains a borderline case. In most cases, the commotion is avoided because the hierarchy chooses to compromise with the individuals or groups involved at a given time of social or religious authority free from any official function or rank. This was the case with the Italian Flagellants, who managed to keep their fundamental inspiration provided they entered the well-defined and accepted structure of the confraternities. But from the fourteenth century, the institutions became more ruthless and demanded total submission. The Church would admit visionaries and inspired shepherdeses solely in an emergency, when there was nothing to dampen their claim—every day more definite—to rule the whole of human existence, religion included. After 1430, old women were hunted in the remotest hamlets and mountains on account of their practical wisdom, renamed witchcraft, while Savonarola, the first prophet before Luther to raise the flag of rebellion against the corruption of the Roman Church, perished at the stake in 1498. Under such harsh and systematic repression, the informal powers were reduced to

²² See Gary Dickson, "Encounters in Medieval Revivalism: Monks, Friars and Popular Enthusiasts," *Church History* 68 (1999), 265–93.

²³ On these developments, see *Poteri carismatici e informali: Chiesa e società medievali*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and André Vauchez (Palermo, 1992).

²⁴ Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978).

a marginal and clandestine position even though they would occasionally resurface as spasmodic outbursts in conjunction with such crises as the religious wars of the sixteenth century. But this leads us away from the Middle Ages, dear to Gary Dickson. His work permits a better interpretation and comprehension of a key aspect of this momentous period of history.

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MAKING SAINTS

The two studies in this first section focus on issues of gender, power and authority in the creation and characterization of female sanctity. In the first, "The Women Behind Their Saints: Dominican Women's Promotion of the Cults," Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner examines Dominican women's promotion of the cults of their saintly female associates in order to consolidate their religious ways of life. Scholars writing about saints' cults have long addressed the political uses of sanctity, but they have silently presumed that such activity was part of men's religious culture, and thus Dominican and other women's active roles in the creation of saints' cults have been largely ignored. As a challenge to this assumption, and in light of contemporary records concerning Dominican nuns and Italian female penitents, the author argues that Dominican women actively worked to attract friars' and other clergymen's attention to the perceived sanctity of some of their religious sisters in order to legitimize the existence of their communities at a time when women's religious associations (including traditional monasteries) rarely enjoyed stable institutional privileges. Even though such Dominican saints as Giovanna of Orvieto and Catherine of Siena ultimately became widely known through the *vitae* written by Dominican friars, this study demonstrates that women played key roles in the early promotion of the cults and used the saintly fames of Giovanna and Catherine to ensure the stability of their own institutions.

In "Gender Trouble in Paradise: The Problem of the Liturgical *Virgo*," Felice Lifshitz brings to light a very different case of interplay between male authority and female sanctity. The 'liturgical *virgo*' of Christian saints' names litanies is a problematic figure that raises questions concerning the significance of gender in a liturgical context. From the ninth century, the overwhelming majority of extant litanies organized the male saints into explicitly labelled categories: apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors and numerous smaller subcategories. These categories implicitly recognized male experience as varied and multiform, yet simultaneously excluded women from key areas of historical agency, such as apostle and martyr: all the venerated female heroines of Christian history were designated by a single label, *virgo*, and placed at the very end of the litany. However, this new examination of liturgical sources dating from the sixth through eighth centuries reveals numerous alternative and competing possibilities for the conceptualization and categorization of gender and saintly identity. This

suggests that the gendered categorization of liturgical sanctity which dominated from the ninth century was neither natural nor inevitable, and that the liturgical *virgo* was an ideological invention deployed by certain male ecclesiastics in their ongoing battle to remove or to distance consecrated women from sacred space.

THE WOMEN BEHIND THEIR SAINTS:
DOMINICAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTIONAL USES
OF THE CULTS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS COMPANIONS*

Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner

For the past forty years, scholars working with cults of saints have been interested in the political and social uses of sanctity, but little attention has been given to women's institutional uses of the cults of saints, for the silent presupposition has been that such activity was part of men's religious culture. Thus, women's active roles in the creation of various saints' cults have been largely ignored even in studies expressly focusing on gender and sainthood. I here use examples concerning Dominican nuns and penitent women of Italy to argue that women sought to legitimize the existence of their religious communities by attracting the attention of friars and other clergymen to the perceived sanctity of some of their companions. Though such Dominican *beatae* as Giovanna of Orvieto (d. 1306), Agnes of Montepulciano (d. 1317), Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), and Maria of Venice (d. 1399) ultimately became known through the *vitae* written by the Dominican friars, their cults were first established by women, and thus the means by which they did so will be the focus of this chapter.

In order to appreciate the creative ways religious women used the cults of their co-religionists, it is necessary to keep in mind that throughout the Middle Ages, both nuns and religious laywomen typically lived under ad hoc arrangements, if not in institutional limbo. Women's religious communities, even the ones that at some point were incorporated into a religious order, had to seek repeatedly for reaffirmation of their status from ecclesiastical and secular leaders, superiors of religious orders, and the popes.¹ In this battle for institutional stability,

* An earlier version of this study was presented at the session, "W.O.W.: Wise Old Women in Later Medieval Culture," held at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds (July 2005). My thanks to Anneke Mulder-Bakker for the invitation and to all of the session participants for their constructive comments.

¹ Herbert Grundmann asserted in chapter 5 of his classic, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German*

women not only took advantage of the prestige of sainthood, but also used it as an ideological weapon that bolstered their requests for privileges and statutes.

A few notable examples of women's own hagiographical writing survive, among them the *nonnenbücher* that chronicle the lives of nuns in German-speaking areas; Bartolomea Riccoboni's chronicle of Corpus Domini, a reformed Dominican nunnery in Venice; and Illuminata Bembo's *Specchio di Illuminazione*, a life of the Franciscan mystic, Catherine Vigri of Bologna.² More typically, though, women contributed to the writing of the lives of saints vicariously—but not passively—by bringing the saintly individual to a hagiographer's attention by providing him with much of the needed material. Women also buttered their requests with financial donations to a religious order. Such women thus virtually hired a hagiographer whose involvement presented their case in an institutionally acceptable light. They more than willingly hid behind a male hagiographer, purposefully misleading their contemporaries and historians alike to believe that their efforts were grounded in an acceptable male initiative. But an analysis of the origins of a number of individual cults proves the primacy of women's initiatives, financial involvement, and practical objectives, all of which go undetected if one merely focuses on hagiographical texts as products of male writers' activities.³

Mysticism (trans. Steven Rowan [Notre Dame, Ind., 1995]); that by the 1260s, the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Cistercians were forced to accept their responsibilities towards religious women. But a study of later periods shows that the same tug-of-war between women and religious orders continued throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, leaving behind a long and winding trail of mutually contradictory papal pronouncements, proclamations by the religious orders' chapters, privileges and counterstatements to these privileges.

² German women's *nonnenbücher* or *schwesternbücher* largely chronicled the communities' past through hagiographic genres. See Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, for Women, about Women: The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto, 1996); and Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, Pa., 2004). Bartolomea Riccoboni's chronicle is a rare surviving example of Dominican nuns' chronicles produced in Italy. It has been edited and translated into English by Daniel Bornstein as: Bartolomea Riccoboni, *Life and Death in a Venetian Convent: The Chronology of Corpus Domini, 1395–1436* (Chicago, 2000). Illuminata Bembo's life of Catherine Vigri of Bologna, *Specchio di Illuminazione*, was edited by Silvia Mostaccio (Florence, 2001).

³ This focus on women's indirect involvement in the writing of the *vitae* is akin to Katherine Gill's approach in her indispensable article, "Women and Production of Religious Literature in the Vernacular, 1300–1500," in E. Ann Matter and John Coakley, eds., *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: Religious and Artistic Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 64–104. She argued that the emergence of late medieval

Nuns and Laywomen: Shared Concerns

Scholarship on Dominican women has a few peculiar geographical biases that have contributed to an awkward imbalance between the study of Italian nuns and the area's female penitents. The first problem concerns the study of Dominican monasteries: while we have several classical and recent studies of Dominican nuns' houses in German-speaking countries, little has been produced on Dominican nuns in other areas. This imbalance in research is certainly connected to the fact that the German-speaking countries housed the majority of Dominican nunneries and that these houses were also active in producing monastic chronicles.⁴ But it is still regrettable that the study of Dominican institutions in France, Italy, or elsewhere in Europe has either focused on the first Dominican establishments (Prouille and Montargis in France, San Sisto in Rome, St. Agnes in Bologna, and St. Dominic in Madrid) or placed individual houses within the isolated context of the histories of towns and regions.⁵

The second geographical bias concerns Dominican laywomen. Here the weight shifts from Germany to Italy with the result that Italian laywomen, commonly spoken of as penitents, have gained excessive attention in comparison to the laity that was associated with the Dominicans in other regions. The historians have scooped all of the *mulieres religiosae* of Italy into the Dominican Order, even when the women had merely nominal collaboration with the friars, representing them all as penitents with an accepted status among the Dominicans. By contrast, the *mulieres religiosae* of central and northern Europe, who had similar loose associations with the Dominicans—or, for that matter, with other religious orders—have been labeled as independent beguines. I have argued elsewhere that this double standard has rested on an unwarranted and anachronistic projection produced by the fifteenth century Dominican friars and modern historians of the order (the majority of whom were

vernacular texts cannot be studied separately from women's active roles as patrons and consumers of such literature.

⁴ On the concentration of the Dominican monasteries in German provinces, see William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 2 vols. (New York, 1965), 1: 377–80.

⁵ The Dominican monasteries in German-speaking countries have been placed within the context of broader cultural currents, for instance, by Gertrud Jaron Lewis and Anne Winston-Allen (both as in n. 2, above), but similar work is still to be done in other geographic regions. I am currently preparing a book on Dominican nuns in Italy.

also Dominicans). Although they claimed that Italian Dominican laywomen enjoyed an institutionally specific position within the order from the 1280s onward, I have argued that such status was in reality granted only at the beginning of the fifteenth century and confirmed by Pope Innocent VII in 1405.⁶ Such efforts to revamp the status of the Dominican laity in Italy were largely motivated by the friars' desire to appropriate the cult of Catherine of Siena, a penitent who initially had only informal ties with the order, but rose to an unprecedented reputation as a mystic, ascetic, and reformer, eventually coming to exceed in popularity even the order's founder, St. Dominic.⁷

The Dominican nuns and laywomen of Italy are thus placed in two opposite camps when it comes to scholarly attention, thus contributing to a situation in which the lives of Dominican nuns are overshadowed by those of penitent women. Yet, in regard to our particular question concerning Dominican nuns' and laywomen's institutional uses of the cults of their sainted women, we may observe that women across religious boundaries were pressed by the same need to prove the acceptability of their institutions and used similar tactics of supporting their claims with the ideological bolster of sainthood. In this study, I shall examine the clustered cults of Agnes of Montepulciano, the founder of women's communities in Proceno and Montepulciano, and the penitents, Giovanna of Orvieto, Catherine of Siena, and Maria of Venice. Though the cults of these four women were eventually made popular by the observant Dominican friars at the turn of the fifteenth

⁶ Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules as an Interactive Process: Dominican Penitent Women and the Making of their *Regula*," *Speculum* 79 (2004), 660–87; and "Introduction," in *Dominican Penitent Women*, ed. and trans. Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, with contributions by Daniel E. Bornstein and E. Ann Matter (New York, 2005). For a detailed analysis of the early fifteenth-century friars' rewriting of the history of the Dominican penitent rule, see also Martina Wehrli-Johns, "L'Osservanza dei Domenicani e il movimento penitenziale laico: Studi sulla 'regola di Munio' e sul Terz'ordine domenicano in Italia e Germania," in *Ordini religiosi e società politica in Italia e Germania nei secoli XIV e XV*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini and Kaspar Elm (Bologna, 2001), pp. 287–329.

⁷ Catherine of Siena's importance for the Dominican Order and for its laity in particular cannot be overstated. Werner Williams-Krapp has used surviving German manuscripts to show that hagiographic texts concerning Catherine were more widely circulated than those concerning St. Dominic. See Werner Williams-Krapp, "Kulturpflege und literarische Überlieferung: Zur deutschen Hagiographie der Dominkaner im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," in *Ist mir getroumet mîn leben? Vom Träumen und Anderssein: Festschrift für Karl-Ernst Geith zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Schnyder, et al. (Göppingen, 1998), pp. 147–73.

century, before this, all four rose to the public's attention because of the promotion of their sanctity by women around them.

A "Strange Nun" Transformed into an Icon of Dominican Piety

Anna Benvenuti has fittingly observed that Agnes of Montepulciano, who died in 1317, was a "*strana suora di una strana congregazione*" ("strange nun of a strange congregation").⁸ Her entire existence is clouded by questions, and her affiliation with the Dominican Order is not at all clear.⁹ She would be a minor figure in the history of the Dominican Order were it not for the fact that she joins princess Margaret of Hungary (d. 1270) as the only canonized medieval nun with ties to the Dominican Order.¹⁰ The fact that this *strana suora* rose from obscurity to a miracle-making holy corpse has traditionally been attributed to Raymond of Capua (d. 1399), who in the 1360s served as a rector in the community founded by Agnes and wrote her *vita* between 1363 and 1366.¹¹ But, as shall be discussed below, Raymond would probably have never written his account of Agnes's life had he not been asked to do so by the women at Agnes's community who were eager to bolster the status of their monastery.

At the time of Agnes's death, Montepulciano did not yet have a full convent for Dominican friars. Hence, the formal affiliation of Agnes's community with the order was problematic, given that remote satellite communities for women were discouraged by an order that was struggling to focus its thinly-spread resources.¹² However, the friars of

⁸ Anna Benvenuti Papi, "*In Castro Poenitentiae*": *Santità e società femminile e nell'Italia medievale* (Rome, 1990), p. 252.

⁹ For Agnes's biography, see Timoteo Centi, "S. Agnese Poliziana 'Sorella Maggiore' di S. Caterina," *S. Caterina Da Siena* 16 (1965), 17–23; and respective entries in *Il Grande Libro dei Santi: Dizionario Enciclopedico*, 3 vols., ed. Elio Guerrero and Dorino Tuniz (Turin, 1998); *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, 13 vols. (Rome, 1861–1971); and David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1992). For a summary of the debate concerning Agnes's status as a Dominican, see Silvia Nocentini, "Introduzione," in Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis de Monte Policiano*, ed. Silvia Nocentini (Florence, 2001), pp. xx–xxiv.

¹⁰ Both women were canonized during the modern era: Agnes of Montepulciano in 1726 and Margaret of Hungary in 1943.

¹¹ On Raymond as the author of Agnes's *vita*, see Nocentini, "Introduzione," pp. xii–xx.

¹² Alberto Zucchi published three articles in which he sought to establish Dominican patronage of Agnes's foundation, even though the order did not have a permanent *locum* or *conventum* in Montepulciano: "I Domenicani a Montepulciano," *Memorie Domenicane*

nearby Orvieto did offer some religious assistance to the community during the first half of the fourteenth century, for Fra Giovanni Bonum's obituary of 1330, included in the Chronicle of St. Dominic of Orvieto, introduced him as a prefect (*prefectus*) for "the ladies of St. Agnes" and described him as "advising them for many years about entrances, status, and the way of life that God and the order's institutes required."¹³ As we lack other evidence concerning such supervision, it is impossible to substantiate how consistently it was offered or what specifically the Dominican chronicler referred to when he described the community in Montepulciano as "our monastery." The nature of Raymond's association as a rector at Agnes's community between 1363 and 1366 is similarly uncertain, for we know of his activity only through his own passing remarks, presented in Agnes's *vita* and, in particular, from his later writings concerning Catherine of Siena.¹⁴

What is clear, though, is that the fate of Agnes's community rested on the success of the cult of its founder. In an awkward maneuver, the community's original name, Santa Maria Novella, was summarily dropped. In the aforementioned passage from the Chronicle of St. Dominic of Orvieto, written before 1350, the nuns were vaguely referred to instead as the ladies of Saint Agnes (*dominae Sancte Agnetis*). Raymond of Capua presented this ad hoc change of dedication as a welcome sign of people's devotion toward Agnes, even though he was aware that such renaming of a church was not an acceptable canonical practice in the first place and much less so when the dedication was made to a *beata* yet to be canonized.¹⁵ Raymond's obscure references to the *monasterium* or *monasterium S. Agnetis* in his later texts¹⁶ contributed

51 (1934), 251–54; "L'Ordine Domenicano a Montepulciano," *Memorie Domenicane* 61 (1944), 6–19; and "Gli Ospizi Domenicani in Toscana," *Memorie Domenicane* 62 (1945), 10–19. The Dominican affiliation had been challenged by R. Taucci, who argued that Agnes's house originally belonged to the Order of the Servants of Mary (*servi di Maria*); see R. Taucci, "Il Convento di S. Maria di Montepulciano e i suoi ricordi," *Studi storici sull'Ordine dei Servi di Maria* 2 (1934, Fasc. 1), pp. 22–51. Such affiliation may or may not be true, for it is equally possible that Agnes's house existed at first without any ties to established religious orders.

¹³ "[...] et in signum sincerissime castitatis prefectus est dominabus Sancte Agnetis monasterii nostri de Monte Policiano, informando eas in incessu, statu et habitu secundum Deum et ordinis instituta annis pluribus" (Jean [Giovanni]-Mactei Caccia, *Chronique du couvent des prêcheurs d'Orvieto*, ed. A.M. Vieil and P.M. Girardin [Rome, 1907], p. 106).

¹⁴ Nocentini, "Introduzione," pp. xii–xiii.

¹⁵ Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁶ Raymond was present at the reception of Chiara di Luca Mancini's donation

to a lasting confusion as to whether St. Agnes was the house's actual name or simply a reference to the fact that the house was founded by Agnes, a question that modern historians have comically tried to avoid answering by simply referring to the house as *the* monastery.¹⁷

But who were the architects behind the changed dedication of Agnes's community? Raymond wrote that the house was referred to as Saint Agnes "by believers" (*a fidelibus*),¹⁸ but it is probable that such a generic expression principally referred to the nuns at Agnes's monastery. They were eager to boost the fame of the community's founder and powerful enough to win over friars like Raymond, even when the practice of rededication was questionable and, as Raymond attested, had stirred some murmuring (*a plurimis talis denominatio fuerit reprehensa*).¹⁹ The nuns' devotion to Agnes was thus in full swing before Raymond appeared on the stage, something we should not forget when we look at the genesis and function of Agnes's cult.

Raymond has to be pulled down from his pedestal for us to appreciate fully the dynamics between him and the nuns at Agnes's community. Although in 1380 Raymond became the master general of the Dominican Order, in the 1360s he was but a friar in his early thirties, involved in the not-so-prestigious task of directing nuns at an obscure and remote community in Montepulciano. There is no evidence of any sort to suggest that his writing of Agnes's *vita* fell within any broader promotion of women's monastic life. Even after his election as master general in 1380, Raymond remained virtually silent about Dominican nuns until the early 1390s, when he took part in the first efforts to reform a few monasteries in Germany and Italy.²⁰ It was also only at this point that Raymond began to rhapsodize on Agnes as a paragon

to Agnes's community (22 November 1374). In this document the community is spoken of as *monasterium S. Agnetis*. See A.W. van Ree, "Raymond de Capoue: Éléments biographiques," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 33 (1963), p. 230, Docum. 1.

¹⁷ Agnes cuts a peculiar figure as a founder saint whose modern biographies do not mention the name of the community she founded, which is the case with all the major encyclopedic entries devoted to her (in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*; *Il Grande Libro dei Santi*; and Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*).

¹⁸ Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ The reform of Dominican nunneries spread slowly and sporadically from Germany, where Conrad of Prussia reformed the first houses in 1389. Raymond launched the reform through the entire Dominican order in 1390, but the first reformed Dominican monastery in Italy, Corpus Domini of Venice, was established only in 1394. For the time line of the reform, see van Ree, "Raymond de Capoue," pp. 202–29.

of women's enclastered Dominican life. Ironically, these eulogies to Agnes come from the pages of Raymond's *Legenda maior* of Catherine of Siena, an unclastered lay saint (but an admirer of Agnes, as will be discussed below). All Raymond's elaborate references to Agnes in the *Legenda maior* appear, with two minor exceptions, in the last chapters of Part Two, which we know to have been written only around 1392.²¹ Therefore, Raymond's writing of Agnes's *vita* in the 1360s seems to represent an isolated incident that became significant only in the light of later events.

Women at Agnes's monastery, however, certainly had a motivation to promote the cult of the community's founder, especially as the house was left in the awkward position of having an unspecified affiliation with an order that did not have official representation in the town. Raymond attested in the prologue to his *vita* of Agnes that four older nuns, who had personally known the *beata*, had functioned as his witnesses or relators (*relatrices*).²²

On the surface, the use of the term, *relatrix*, suggests the passive answering of the writer's questions, but such a reading rests on an unwarranted presupposition that the main instigator in the exchange was the writer, in this case Raymond of Capua. When we leave aside modern notions of authorship and give due credit to the witnesses, it becomes evident that these older women exercised social roles that powerfully complemented Raymond's activity. Because most of the accounts captured in the *vita* were generated by the four old *relatrices*, or by other women in Agnes's community, one may ask whether Raymond was but a hired hand, artfully representing the claims of his female patrons.²³ For Raymond, Agnes was a remote cult figure

²¹ Raymond stated in a letter to Catherine's followers, dated 18 June 1392, that he had just completed the second part of the *Legenda*; see Raymond of Capua, *Opuscula et litterae*, ed. P.G.M. Cormier (Rome, 1895), p. 74. Raymond makes two passing remarks to Agnes earlier in the second part of the *Legenda maior*, in chapters 199 and 281, but the elaborate treatment of Catherine's veneration of Agnes comes in chapters 324–29, the last chapters of Part Two. See Raymond of Capua, *De Sanctae Catharinae de Senensis* [the *Legenda maior*] in *Acta Sanctorum*, April III, pp. 862–967.

²² “Inter audientes autem et videntes facta eius miranda, fuerunt mihi relatrices quatuor religiose sorores, que supersunt adhuc et fuerunt cum ea a sue iuventutis primordiis conversate ac ab ipsa sacre religionis monitis doctriate” (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, p. 5).

²³ Women act as witnesses to Agnes's life throughout the *legenda*. Raymond mentioned that he also perused an earlier version of Agnes's life (now lost), which historians have speculated to have been written by a Dominican, possibly a certain Jacobo of Laterine. See Nocentini, “Introduzione,” p. xiv. But, given that there is no positive evidence of

who had died a half a century before he settled in Montepulciano, but for the nuns, the molding of Agnes into a Dominican cast was a strategy for institutional survival. Though we do not know the specific circumstances of the writing of the *vita*, it would not be surprising if the people's aforementioned murmuring about the community's status prompted the nuns to turn to Raymond for clerical authorization of their institution. This need to legitimize the monastery's existence and its changed name would also help to explain why the Dominican status of Agnes's community is expressly asserted in a few passages that read like bulletins inserted in a narrative that otherwise makes few references to Dominican influence.²⁴

Women's backing of Agnes's cult continued later with Catherine of Siena, a laywoman herself, but still a powerful force within women's monasticism. Because Raymond of Capua became Catherine's confessor around 1374 or 1375 and later wrote her *Legenda maior* (between 1385 and 1395), Catherine's interest in Agnes has been viewed through the matrix of Raymond's actions, ignoring the fact that Catherine's promotion of Agnes and her community cannot be entirely subsumed under Raymond's involvement. Catherine's engagement with the community was personal, as her two nieces—the daughters of her brother, Bartolomeo, and Lisa Colombini—were placed in Agnes's community after their father's death.²⁵ She also exercised strikingly pastoral authority over the nuns, for her six letters to these women, though mystical in tone, offered practical directives concerning monastic life and presented Agnes as an exemplar of contemplative cloistered piety.²⁶ Catherine also had two miraculous encounters with Agnes's corpse: in the first instance, Agnes's foot rose to Catherine's lips as she bent down to kiss the corpse; in the second, manna poured from heaven when Catherine paid her respects to the relic. Both occurrences happened in front of female audiences and were accordingly reported by

Dominican authorship of the lost earlier *legenda*, would it not be equally plausible that such a *legenda* was written by the ones who had the dominant role in the oral culture concerning Agnes, namely, the women at her community?

²⁴ Raymond's assertions concerning the Dominican status of Agnes's house appear in his *Legenda beate Agnetis*, pp. 4, 40–41 and 43. Otherwise, Agnes's taking of a religious habit and her founding of the communities in Proceno and Montepulciano—as well as women's lives in these communities—are discussed in terms that do not imply any involvement on the friars' part.

²⁵ Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, chaps. 328–329.

²⁶ Catherine of Siena, *Le Lettere*, 6 vols., ed. Piero Misciatelli (Florence, 1970), nos. iv, xxvi, liii, liv, lviii, and cccxxvi.

them, for the circular purpose of boosting the significance of both the miracle-making nun and her Sienese devotee.²⁷ Agnes's cult was thus carried from the 1360s (when Raymond wrote the *vita*) to the 1370s through a women's network, keen to preserve—and to construct—her memory, which provided a powerful *raison d'être* and statement of legitimacy for their community.

The momentum of enthusiasm that surrounded Agnes's monastery in the 1360s (with the production of her *vita*), then in the middle of the 1370s (with Catherine's involvement), and again in the 1390s (when monastic reforms rekindled Raymond's interest in Agnes), did not last into the fifteenth century. It is not clear when the community began to dwindle, but we do know that in 1435 it was closed down and its remaining sisters moved to St. Paul, a Dominican monastery in Orvieto.²⁸ In a paradoxical way, however, this closing of Agnes's community involved an indirect tribute to the efforts of the fourteenth-century women and their supporters, for by the 1440s the Dominican status of Agnes's community was an accepted fact. Its status allowed the remaining women at Agnes's monastery to be placed in another, well-established, Dominican house and protected them from being reduced to an ignominious community of religious women without a formal affiliation or means for survival, a fate common to many medieval women's religious houses.

Beyond Munio, Raymond and Caffarini

Just as Agnes of Montepulciano's cult has been traditionally viewed by historians as a result of the involvement of Raymond of Capua and other friars, so too the contemporary institutionalization of the Dominican penitent order has been taken as the work of the male religious. But just as Agnes's fame and the 'Dominicanization' of her community rested on women's initiatives, so too the institutionalization of the Dominican lay women's religious associations would not have happened without significant efforts by women. The institutional narrative of the Dominican penitent order, which has traditionally centered

²⁷ Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, chaps. 328–330.

²⁸ *Bullarium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 7 vols., ed. T. Ripoll and A. Bremond (Rome, 1729–1740), 3:42 (1435, 20 June); and Zucchi, "L'Ordine Domenicano a Montepulciano," pp. 16–17.

on the work of master generals Munio of Zamora (1285–1291) and Raymond of Capua (1380–1399), and the friar Thomas Caffarini of Siena (d. 1434), should henceforth acknowledge the endeavors of laywomen themselves.²⁹ Penitent women, not unlike those behind Agnes of Montepulciano, presented saintly women from their own ranks to the friars, pairing their celebration of the *beata* with requests for institutional favors. Though it was the friars who produced the documents to establish institutional recognition and acted as the writers of the saintly penitent women's *vitae*, it was the women's own advocacy, peppered with financial donations, that provided the necessary initial thrust for the cults of their saintly companions.

There are three significant mileposts within the history of the institutionalization of the Dominican penitent order: the 1280s, when the penitent women of Orvieto received a set of primitive rules, the *Ordinationes*, from Munio of Zamora; the 1370s, when Catherine of Siena transformed the image of Dominican lay life from a loosely defined association of widows into a religiously rigorous association for women from all walks of life; and the turn of the fifteenth century, when the official rule for the Dominican laity was produced and finally approved by Pope Innocent VII in 1405. Elsewhere I have shown that the *Ordinationes* of Munio, written in 1286, was not the official Dominican penitent rule of 1405, but was erroneously attributed to him by Thomas Caffarini of Siena and scores of modern historians of the Dominican Order.³⁰ It is not possible here to address the thwarted history of the Dominican lay rule, but for us to appreciate women's roles in the promotion of their saints, it is necessary for us to understand that—contrary to the traditional histories of the Dominican penitent women—Munio did not yet establish a formal bond between the friars and the penitent women. In other words, the Dominican laywomen, who hitherto have been represented as having followed an official penitent rule from the

²⁹ I hope to have demonstrated in my article, "Writing Religious Rules," that the historians have exaggerated Dominican friars' involvement in the lives of penitent women and have consequently not paid due tribute to penitent women's own institutional initiatives.

³⁰ Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," pp. 663–66. The *Ordinationes* is edited on pp. 683–686. An English translation is available in Lehmijoki-Gardner, *Dominican Penitent Women*, pp. 39–45. Though Martina Wehrli-Johns was unaware of the existence of the *Ordinationes*, she was correct to observe that the attribution of the 1405 rule to Munio of Zamora was but a fabrication on Dominican friar Thomas Caffarini of Siena's part and then later accepted by the historians of the order. See Wehrli-Johns, "L'Osservanza dei Domenicani," pp. 300–303.

1280s onward, were in fact in an institutionally ambiguous position until 1405 when their official rule was finally approved by the pope.

When Munio of Zamora produced his rudimentary guidelines or *Ordinationes*, he did not do so because he wanted to control penitents or because he had a consistent plan concerning spiritual and social aspects of religious lay life. He produced the *Ordinationes* because the laywomen of Orvieto asked him for them, as he states in the text: “The aforementioned sisters requested that the venerable father, Fra Munio, master general of the Friars Preachers, would ratify everything listed above and would see it fit to attach his seal to the *Ordinationes* presented here. On the pious insistence of the sisters, I, the aforesaid master, attach my seal on the presented rules.”³¹

The writing of the *Ordinationes* seems to have been an inconsequential event in Munio’s life as there is no evidence of his consistent involvement with the religious laity before or after the publication of the text.³² For the penitent women of Orvieto, however, the document became cherished proof of their institutional acceptance. It was stored together with other privileges and statutes, and later sent to the penitent women of Siena for their use as well.³³

The penitents of Orvieto did not merely count on the institutional weight of the *Ordinationes*, but coupled its favorable message with a promotion of a saint of their own, Giovanna of Orvieto. Giovanna’s cult gained civic importance soon after her death in 1306 and her *legenda* was written by an anonymous friar before the middle of the fourteenth century, but the first promoters of her cult were other penitent women of Orvieto, especially their prioress Ghisla.³⁴ Giovanna’s *legenda* shows that Ghisla promoted Giovanna’s ecstatic piety already during her lifetime,

³¹ Munio of Zamora, *Ordinationes*, trans. Lehmijoki-Gardner in *Dominican Penitent Women*, p. 45. For the Latin original, see Lehmijoki-Gardner, “Writing Religious Rules,” p. 686.

³² On Munio of Zamora’s career, within which nuns played a far greater role than penitents, see Peter Linehan, *The Ladies of Zamora* (Manchester, 1997).

³³ The *Ordinationes* may be found in Siena, Biblioteca Comunale T.II.8.a, which is bound together with another little book of privileges and statutes, T.II.8.b. See Lehmijoki-Gardner, “Writing Religious Rules,” pp. 661–63.

³⁴ For Giovanna of Orvieto’s *legenda*, see *La “Legenda” di Vanna da Orvieto*, ed. Emore Paoli and Luigi G.G. Ricci (Spoleto, 1996). Emore Paoli rejects the customary attribution of Giovanna’s *legenda* to the Dominican friar, Giacomo Scalza; see his introduction, “Pulcherrima vocor ab omnibus et non Vanna’: Vanna da Orvieto dalla storia all’agiografia,” in *La “Legenda” di Vanna da Orvieto*, pp. 6–9. On Giovanna’s civic importance in Orvieto, see pp. 16–22.

and, when the *beata* passed on, Ghisla prepared ground for Giovanna's posthumous veneration by arranging her remains to be translated from a cemetery to an altar in the Church of St. Dominic.³⁵

Thus, Giovanna, who had taken the penitent habit around 1284, a few years before the writing of the *Ordinationes*, and for years lived piously at Ghisla's home, became a mystic symbol of a way of life that still did not have an official position within the Dominican Order.³⁶ Though we do not know the identities of the women requesting Munio to write his *Ordinationes* on 7 December 1286, it would not be surprising if Ghisla and her equally powerful husband, Ildebrandino Sperandei, orchestrated the entire move, for on the same December day Ildebrandino's confraternity, the *militia* of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also received a set of privileges from Munio.³⁷ Ghisla and her husband certainly had the financial means to impress the Dominicans. One such display of generosity, a hefty bequest to Orvieto's St. Dominic in 1292, provided a good backdrop for Ghisla when, fifteen years later, she wanted to assure the translation of Giovanna's remains.³⁸ She simply had to turn to her old friend, the papal penitentiary Ildebrandino of Clusio, who had been a friar in St. Dominic at the time of Ghisla and her husband's donation. Not surprisingly, Ildebrandino was more than willing to lend his ecclesiastical support to a generous donor, even when her group of laywomen apparently otherwise had little daily contact with the friars.³⁹

"When These Women Told Me about Her..."

Similar dynamics between powerful laywomen and a *beata* from their ranks occurred in the 1370s, when Catherine of Siena rose to unprecedented fame, and at the turn of the fourteenth century, when

³⁵ *La "Legenda" di Vanna da Orvieto*, pp. 146, 150–52, 166–67.

³⁶ On Giovanna's taking of the habit, see Paoli, "'Pulcherrima vocor ab omnibus,'" p. 4.

³⁷ In Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, T.II.8.a, the *Ordinationes* (fols. 1r–8v) is immediately followed by Munio's privilege to the *militia* (fols. 8v–10r). See also Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," p. 667.

³⁸ For the donation, see Tommaso Maria Mamachi, *Annalium Ordinis Praedicatorum volumen primum* (Rome, 1756), appendices, pp. 184–86.

³⁹ *La "Legenda" di Vanna da Orvieto*, p. 166. Giovanna's *legenda* makes a reference to her taking the Dominican habit (pp. 142–43), but the *legenda* does not suggest that the friars were involved in the daily religious lives of Ghisla, Giovanna, or their group.

Dominican penitents of Venice presented Maria of Venice as a perceived sign of God's benevolence toward their penitent way of life. Catherine's first supporters were women, many of them from leading Sieneese families. Her closest companion, Alessia, belonged to the aristocratic Saracini family. Her sister-in-law, Lisa, was a penitent from the wealthy Colombini family that also produced the famed lay preacher, Giovanni Colombini; and her mother, Lapa, who became a penitent after her husband's death in 1368, was the daughter of a noted poet, Puccio Piacenti.⁴⁰

Before Raymond of Capua began to serve as Catherine of Siena's confessor in 1374, her fame as a mystic had already spread beyond Siena. *I miracoli di Santa Caterina da Siena*, written by an anonymous author in 1374, illustrates well the female propagation of Catherine's cult. This text, the only surviving hagiographic account written during Catherine's lifetime, opens with the following words:

In May 1374 a *vestita* of the *pinzochere* of Saint Dominic, Catherine, a daughter of Jacobo of Siena, came to Florence at the same time that the General Chapter of the Friars Preachers was summoned there by the order's master. She was only twenty-seven years old and had the reputation of being a holy servant of God. She was guarded by three *pinzochere* of her habit. When these women told me about her, I wanted to see her and befriend her. She came a few times to my house.⁴¹

This scene conveys an intimate and domestic portrayal of Catherine as an emerging saint surrounded by a network of women who were willing and capable of elevating her to the podium of holiness. Its intimacy makes one wonder if the anonymous author of *Il miracoli* was not a woman herself, opening her home to the itinerant group of religious women and then doing her share to pass on the joyous message concerning a living saint.

Be that as it may, women's promotion of Catherine continued until and beyond her death in 1380: women bombarded Raymond with accounts concerning Catherine's virtues and miracles, ranking as the

⁴⁰ On women associated with Catherine, see Karen Scott, "Urban Spaces, Women's Networks, and the Lay Apostolate," in Matter and Coakley, *Creative Women*, pp. 105–19. I thank F. Thomas Luongo for pointing out Lapa's creative and influential role in the building of Catherine's cult, and for allowing me to consult the manuscript of his recently published book, *The Sainly Politics of Catherine of Siena* (Ithaca, 2006).

⁴¹ *The Miracoli of Catherine of Siena*, in Lehmijoki-Gardner, *Dominican Penitent Women*, p. 90.

most significant witnesses to the saint's life.⁴² These women were not passive witnesses acting at Raymond's prompting; they took part in Catherine's efforts to channel women's Dominican life, both monastic and lay, into new directions long before the Dominicans showed a consistent interest in absorbing Catherine into the Dominican Order.⁴³ And, while Raymond and other Dominican friars came and went, women stayed always on Catherine's side, managing what must have been a chaotic scene: a constant flow of visitors, fervent writing of religious exhortations, frequent travels for pious and political causes, and an abundance of ecstatic religious experiences.⁴⁴

Catherine of Siena was to become the only medieval woman, nuns included, associated with the Dominican Order to be canonized during the Middle Ages (by Pius II in 1461). Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* ensured her fame as a mystic with a strong inclination to apostolate and an active life of service. However, we do not have any evidence suggesting that at this stage Raymond planned to formalize the ties between the Dominican friars and penitent women.⁴⁵ Such a plan arose only at the turn of the fourteenth century, when the penitents of Venice faced criticism that threatened to crumble the shaky foundations of their institution. In 1399, the Dominican laity of Venice was involved in the penitential procession of the *bianchi*, which had been expressly prohibited by the Council of Ten. This unauthorized procession led to the expulsions of the Dominican penitent, Antonio Soranzo, a rare male example in a movement that was otherwise populated by women, and the friar Giovanni Dominici, arguably the most influential Dominican in the town.⁴⁶

After his return from a year of exile, Antonio Soranzo collaborated with the penitent women of Venice and the Dominican Thomas

⁴² Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," p. 673.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 674–76.

⁴⁴ Raymond began as Catherine's confessor probably in autumn 1374 and continued in that capacity until December 1378. However, even during these four years, Raymond was rarely in Catherine's presence, as we may conclude from his busy itinerary (see van Ree, "Raymond de Capoue," pp. 169–87), his heavy reliance on other people's testimonies in the *Legenda maior*, and from Catherine's seventeen letters to him (written in his absence).

⁴⁵ Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," p. 674.

⁴⁶ Daniel Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, 1993), pp. 182–87; and *idem*, "Giovanni Dominici, the Bianchi, and Venice: Symbolic Action and Interpretive Grids," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993), 143–71.

Caffarini of Siena. This team successfully solidified the institutional foundation of the Dominican penitent order, securing papal approval of its rule in 1405. Thomas Caffarini, whose first fifty years of life had passed without record, now became an indefatigable writer of tendentious treatises concerning the Dominican penitent life. His sudden burst into activity cannot be understood if we do not view it within the context of penitents' own efforts to promote their way of life.⁴⁷ Once again, we may observe that penitent women (and the exceptional male penitent, Antonio Soranzo) harnessed the perceived sainthood of one of their own into the service of their institutional aspirations. This time the *beata* was Maria of Venice, who was officially vested as a penitent only for a month before she died at the age of nineteen in 1399.

Thomas Caffarini contributed to Maria of Venice's cult by writing her Latin *vita* in 1402 and translating it into Italian in 1403.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, his personal acquaintance with the *beata* was short lived—it appears that he got to know her only during the weeks preceding her death—and he therefore relied on the testimonies of Maria's female companions, among them Astrologia Verzoni, Caterina Marioni, Isabetta Burlamacchi, Marina Soranzo (Antonio's wife), Lucia Muscelini and—last but not least—Maria's mother, Giacomina of Verona.⁴⁹ Once again, these women's roles as witnesses should not be overlooked or underestimated. They promoted their own saint in order to prove the acceptability of their way of life, even though Maria comes off as a blatantly ordinary saint, bereft of the grandeur of her role model, Catherine of Siena.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ For Thomas's biography and his works, see Fernanda Sorelli, *La santità imitabile: "Leggenda di Maria da Venezia" di Tommaso da Siena* (Venice, 1984), pp. 3–28; and Oriana Visani, "Nota su Tommaso d'Antonio Nacci Caffarini," *Revista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 9, no. 2 (1973), 277–97. It is striking that these meticulously researched biographies do not comment on the peculiar fact that Thomas's entire production, which included several hagiographic works and numerous treatises, comes from the period after 1399 when he was fifty or more years old. The failure to ask this question has both resulted from and contributed to scholarly treatment of Thomas as a *sui generis* force behind the propagation of penitent life, shadowing the initiative of penitents themselves.

⁴⁸ For an outstanding critical edition of the Italian *leggenda*, see Thomas Caffarini of Siena, "Leggenda di Maria da Venezia," in Sorelli, *La santità imitabile*, pp. 145–225. The Latin version, *Legenda cuiusdam beate Mariae*, was edited by Flaminus Cornelius in *Ecclesiae Venetae*, 13 vols. (Venice, 1749), 7:363–420. The Italian version of the *leggenda* has been translated into English by Daniel Bornstein as "The Legend of Maria of Venice," in Lehmijoki-Gardner, *Dominican Penitent Women*, pp. 105–76.

⁴⁹ Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," pp. 681–83.

⁵⁰ Sorelli, *La Santità Imitabile*, pp. 118–33; and idem, "Imitable Sanctity: The Legend of Maria of Venice," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Chicago, 1996), pp. 165–81.

Women's institutional promotion of Maria's cult is particularly clear in the acts of her mother, Giacomina. She not only championed the fame of her deceased daughter, but also substantially helped to finance the process that led to papal approval of the penitent rule in 1405.⁵¹

Married Women and Saintly Virginity

Within the pattern of religious women's use of their saintly companions for the institutional establishment of their pious associations, there is a noteworthy subplot of widowed or married women reshaping their group's image through promotion of virgin saints. Women exploited the gendered value of virginity to their advantage, building the image of their association around it even when their group de facto consisted of widowed or married women. This strategy is apparent in all cases within our cluster of examples. Agnes of Montepulciano rose to become head of her first community in Proceno because of the patronage of a certain Sister Margaret, her *magistra et institutrix* (master and instructor).⁵² It seems that Sister Margaret not only promoted Agnes early on by demanding that she follow her to Proceno, but was willing to cast her young protégée as the figurehead of their newly founded community by positioning Agnes, then a girl of barely fifteen years, as the superior of the community.⁵³ This move of appointing a very young girl of uncertain pedigree as the head of the community could not have had any other institutional rationale than the women's need to transform the community's image from an association of widows into a proper monastery for unmarried women. Indeed, the strategy seems to have worked, at least in the level of women's idealized collective memory, for Raymond was later careful to record that due to Agnes, the community "started to attract even young girls from the nearby villages."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Giacomina contributed a significant sum of forty ducats. See Thomas Caffarini of Siena, *Tractatus de ordine fratrum et sororum de penitentia Sancti Domini F. Tommaso da Siena "Caffarini"*, ed. M.-H. Laurent in *Fontes Vitae S. Catharinae Senensis Historici*, vol. 21 (Siena, 1938), p. 120.

⁵² Margaret's protective relationship with Agnes is discussed in Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, pp. 8, 9, 13–14.

⁵³ Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, pp. 13–14.

⁵⁴ "Cum enim in ipso castro Proceni sororum congregationi et monasterii fundationi operam viriliter et sollicitate darent, tanta gratia diffusa est in labiis virginis sanctae, quod dulcibus monitis et suavibus eloquiis eius nulla virginum posset resistere quin post eam ad Dei servitium curreret, in odorem unguentorum et sanctorum exemplorum suorum, cepitque etiam de castris vicinis paellas attrahere et, sicut veri Pastoris

Similarly, the married Ghisla (whose husband also had entered a religious lay association, the aforementioned *militia* of the Blessed Virgin Mary) celebrated Giovanna, who was not only a mystic with ecstatic visions, but also a virgin known for her sexual purity. Catherine of Siena, whose mystic marriage to Christ made her a *cause célèbre* among the medieval virgin saints, was also initially made famous by a group of widows, among them the loyal Alessia Saracini, Lisa Colombini, and her mother, Lapa Piangeti. Although penitent groups were essentially populated by widows, the virginal image of Giovanna and Catherine was bait that worked: the friars were eventually willing to elaborate on the sanctity of these women, spreading the glow of their virginal sainthood to the rest of the penitent group.⁵⁵

Maria of Venice cuts an awkward figure in this group, for she was the deserted wife of the reckless Giannino della Piazza. Her short marriage was a sociological fact that could not be erased, but since Maria apparently did not have children, returned to her parents' home, and died before she even turned twenty, she could still be effectively molded into an image of a pure girl. The ultimate propagator of this image was Thomas Caffarini, but only after Maria's mother and other older women behind Maria had persuaded him to allow her entrance to the penitent group, just a month before her demise.⁵⁶ These women also showered Thomas with details of Maria's pious life at her parents' home, underscoring her duties as an obedient daughter and drawing attention away from her short-lived tenure as a wife.⁵⁷

The women behind Agnes of Montepulciano, Catherine of Siena, Giovanna of Orvieto, and Maria of Venice were not alone in finding creative ways to further their religious causes. The ample evidence

vicaria, oves dominicas in loco pascue congregare" (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda beate Agnetis*, p. 14).

⁵⁵ On widowhood as a general condition of penitential life, see Lehmijoki-Gardner, "General Introduction," in *Dominican Penitent Women*, pp. 8–10. For the significant contributions that older women and widows made to medieval religious life, see the seminal collection of essays in Anneke Mulder-Bakker and Renée Nip, eds., *The Prime of their Lives: Wise Old Women in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leuven, 2004).

⁵⁶ Since Maria's husband had eloped, he was not available to give the permission that all married women needed before joining a penitent group. This created a major problem for the Dominicans, but persistent women around Maria eventually convinced the friars to accept her. See Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Writing Religious Rules," p. 681.

⁵⁷ Maria's *legenda* mentions her husband a few times (Thomas Caffarini of Siena, *Legend of Maria of Venice*, pp. 116–17 and 132), but otherwise the narrated events occur at her parents' home or in the nearby Dominican venues.

concerning medieval religious women's shrewd uses of the cults of their co-religionists gets lost if we look at the hagiographies as products of a single male author and presume that the text is a result of his clearly articulated religious agenda. However, when we look beyond this narrow understanding of literary authorship, we are presented with a women's agenda that involved proactive female roles as witnesses, financial sponsors, and conscious exploiters of a culturally lauded religious image of virginity. We may also note that women did not waste their firepower in mere spiritual eulogies concerning their saint. Nuns and religious laywomen alike stepped forward when they had an institutional rationale to do so, when the sainthood of their sisters could help them to carve a niche for themselves in a church that had no master plan concerning women's religious life.

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GENDER TROUBLE IN PARADISE:
THE PROBLEM OF THE LITURGICAL *VIRGO*

Felice Lifshitz

Introduction: Litanies and the Liturgical Virgo

What I am calling the 'liturgical *virgo*', perhaps best known through her appearance in Christian saints' name litanies, is a problematic figure.¹ Beginning in the ninth century and to some extent continuing to the present day, the overwhelming majority of extant litanies organize the saints according to a series of explicitly labelled and apparently hierarchical categories. These categories divide the male heroes of the Christian past into a number of different types: apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, and sometimes also patriarchs, prophets, monks, hermits or other smaller subcategories. Yet all of the venerated female heroines of Christian history are ghettoized into a single category and designated by a single label placed at the end of the list of holy names: *virgines* (singular, *virgo*).²

However, the few saints' name litanies which survive from the formative period before and around 800 demonstrate that, from its very inception, the ultimately dominant conventions of gendered categorization were not a part of the practice.³ For instance, the litany added to the Psalter of Mondsee by the nuns of Notre Dame de Soissons includes

¹ Following Gary Dickson's honorary conference in Edinburgh, a version of this essay was presented at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University (May 2005). I thank the organizers of both panels: Tom Brown and Michael Angold at Edinburgh, Bonnie Wheeler and Karl Morrison at Kalamazoo. The essay was written while I was a guest at the Institut für Mittelalterforschung of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna during May and June of 2004. I thank my host, Walter Pohl; my office mate, Helmut Reimitz, and the other Viennese who contributed to the genesis of the essay through bibliographic suggestions and pointed conversations: Doris Schönbichler, Gerhard Hatz and Max Diesenberger. I also wish to thank Conrad Leyser for support and encouragement in Edinburgh, and Roger Collins and Clare Stancliffe for their comments on the paper as originally presented there.

² The conventional pattern is documented through forty-six litanies and discussed by Michael Lapidge in *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints* (London, 1991), especially pp. 59–60.

³ The multiformity of early litany forms is noted by Lapidge (*Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 26–33) but without any specific thematisation of gender.

a number of women under the heading *nomina martyrum*, and attempts to distinguish between the *nomina virginum* and the *nomina sanctorum*.⁴ The litany in London, British Library, Harley 7653 does not explicitly label any categories of persons, although it does group them as follows: figures from the Old Testament, followed by figures from the New Testament, then post-testamental women, some of whom (such as Agnes) were martyrs and some of whom (such as Scholastica) were not.⁵ Like the Psalter of Mondsee, this Mercian manuscript was used by women, as is clear from the feminine grammatical forms which dominate in the prayers.⁶ Had the manuscript been a male devotional instrument, the willingness to rely exclusively on female intercessors would have been even more striking and significant than it already is. But even within the context of a female community, it is still important that we recognize the confidence which some Christian females seem to have had in their founding sisters and mothers. Another early litany from a Mercian prayerbook grouped, but did not explicitly label or even graphically segment, the saints as angels, New Testament figures, male martyrs, male confessors, and female saints.⁷ The absence of categorical labels or even a segregated layout meant there was no attempt to deny to the female figures membership in any conceptual category. Nothing forced a reader to think about the women as *virgines* or in any other single term, and nothing discouraged the reader from thinking about the women as ‘martyrs’ or ‘confessors’. The end of the Royal manuscript list reads simply, *omnes sancti*.

As late as the second half of the ninth century, it was still possible to compose a saints’ name litany which did not explicitly label or categorize the holy figures, and which therefore did not deny, attempt to deny, or imply the possibility of denying to female figures a variety of important statuses such as ‘martyr’. The long litany in the Leofric Missal, compiled in northeast France or Flanders during the second half of the ninth century,⁸ and the extensive, 160-name litany in a

⁴ Montpellier, Bibliothèque Universitaire (Faculté de Médecine) H. 409, ed. Maurice Coens, “Anciennes litanies des saints,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 62 (1944), 132–36.

⁵ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 210–11.

⁶ For the prayers and their use of female grammatical forms, see Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 96.

⁷ London, British Library, Royal 2.A.XX. See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 212–13.

⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579. See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 225–30.

psalter of 883 or 884 from Reims provide the names of the saints in a single, uninterrupted list.⁹ The women whose names appear on the list occupied a variety of different positions during their lifetimes. The rough grouping included women who were clearly not corporeal virgins, such as Perpetua and Felicitas; women who were most famous as early Christian martyrs, such as Agnes and Lucia; and women who could probably best be described as confessors, such as Brigida, Scholastica, Genovefa and Rictrudis. But by this time, most litanies simply labelled all those women and others—regardless of historical or legendary reality—as ‘virgins’.

Those ninth-century litanies which did *not* adhere to the systematically gendered organization described above could presumably tell us much about sites and modes of resistance to the segregationist gender ideologies that were (as we shall see) being propagated through Carolingian ecclesiastical officialdom. However, previous scholarship, uninterested in or insensitive to such matters, has instead explained such litanies as ‘defective’¹⁰ or ‘idiosyncratic’.¹¹

Beyond the Litany: The Evidence of Other Early Liturgical Manuscripts

The liturgical *virgo*, as she appears in the standardized form of Christian saints’ name litanies, is neither historically accurate nor strictly logical. Nor does she appear in other liturgical contexts, as witnessed by manuscripts produced before the middle of the eighth century.

⁹ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 110–14. The manuscript is now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 272.

¹⁰ Maurice Coens writes of the litanies in Cologne, Diözesan- und Dombibliothek 106, “...son ordonnance générale révèle plusieurs défauts. Apparemment, des traditions qui, sur divers points, prévaudront plus tard en la matière n’étaient pas encore bien établies” (“Anciennes litanies des saints,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 54 [1936], p. 14). This particular list of 275 names (edited on pp. 11–13) ranks among the oldest litanies to survive from the continent. The characteristics Coens describes as ‘defects’ are: that it lacks all categorical designations such as ‘martyr’, ‘confessor’ and ‘virgin’; that it mixes martyrs among the confessors and confessors among the martyrs; and that it includes a woman (Beatrice of Rome) among the martyrs. The list was copied during the second half of the ninth century in the Mainz-Werden area into the current Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 8114. At that point, the scribe judged it necessary to insert categorical labels defining who was a ‘martyr’, who was a ‘confessor’ and who was a ‘virgin’ (Coens, “Anciennes litanies des saints,” pp. 19–20).

¹¹ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, p. 75.

The Würzburg *Comes* appears to reflect the Roman epistolary as it stood around 600 and the Roman evangelistary of around 650.¹² The manuscript itself was produced sometime between 700 and 750 by a scribe using German-insular script, who could have been working in Rome, the British Isles, or the Würzburg area. The *Comes* was being used in the Würzburg area from the middle of the eighth century.¹³ It is extensive and inclusive, containing pericopes for all feasts *per circum annum* and also for other occasions such as drought, war, church dedications, and the veiling of a *sponsa*. However, there is no evidence in the *Comes* of any project of liturgical categorization. For instance, there are no common readings from the gospels or the epistles linked to any particular category of saint, be it martyr or *virgo* or confessor or any other generic sub-category of saint. Furthermore, in ninety-nine percent of the cases, the hundreds of individually named venerated persons are given the identical label, namely, ‘saint’, either in masculine or feminine form.

In the Calendar of Willibrord, used by the community at Willibrord’s monastery at Echternach around 700, entries for many of the venerated individuals include no more than the person’s name. However, most of the entries do include a status label. The many monks and nuns who contributed to the Calendar utilized a total of ten different status labels for male saints and three different status labels for female saints.¹⁴ Seventeen male saints and three female saints are labelled ‘martyr’. Ten female saints are *virgines* and two are abbesses. In commemorative contexts at Echternach, both men and women were evaluated individually and given different labels, or none at all. Men were never judged to be ‘virgins’ and there were many more labels and statuses available

¹² The epistolary and the evangelistary of a given church would contain those extracts (pericopes) from the Epistles of Paul or from the Gospels which were routinely read aloud in that church on the recurrent feasts of every liturgical year. Such pericopes can either be proper to, and thus generally exclusively used for, a particular feast (such as Easter, the Discovery of the Holy Cross, the Purification of Mary or the Translation of the relics of St. Stephen); or they can also be common to, and thus generally used interchangeably for, a number of different feasts.

¹³ *Comes Romanus Würzburgensis: Facsimileausgabe des Codex M.p.th.f.62 der Universitäts-Bibliothek Würzburg*, ed. Hans Thurn (Graz, 1968); transcription by Germain Morin in “Le plus ancien comes de l’église de Rome,” *Revue Bénédictine* 27 (1910), 46–72; and idem, “Liturgie et basiliques de Rome au milieu du VII^e siècle d’après les listes d’évangiles de Würzburg,” *Revue bénédictine* 28 (1911), 296–330. For corrections to Morin’s transcriptions, see *Comes Romanus Würzburgensis*, p. 23.

¹⁴ *Calendar of St. Willibrord from MS. Paris Lat. 10.837: A Facsimile with Transcription, Introduction and Notes*, ed. H.A. Wilson (1918; reprint, Woodbridge, 1998).

to male saints than to female ones, as well as a greater willingness to give a male saint the ‘martyr’ label. The community at Echternach was certainly not gender blind when it came to its saints. Nevertheless, a saints’ name litany produced against the conceptual background of the Würzburg *Comes* and the Calendar of Willibrord, and consistent with them, would not follow the pattern traced above for ninth-century and later litanies. Indeed, we already know that eighth-century litanies did not follow this pattern.

The evidence of the Burkhard Gospels is even more intriguing. This sixth-century Italian gospel manuscript (with early eighth-century additions) was part of the initial outfitting of the Würzburg episcopal see, newly founded during the 740s by the first bishop, Burkhard.¹⁵ Gospel readings for various feasts are designated in red along the upper margins of the codex. Some of the readings are specifically keyed to a particular feast. However, and more importantly, other readings are common, that is, they are recommended as suitable for an entire, generic category of saints. We thus read along the upper margins the following entries: *in unius confessoris*; *in natale martyrum*, for a group of male martyrs; *in martyra*, for an individual female martyr; *unius martyris*, for an individual male martyr; *in martyras*, for a group of female martyrs; and *in sanctorum*. There was liturgical gender segregation insofar as male martyrs were venerated with different readings from those used for female martyrs. Nevertheless, both male and female martyrs were celebrated *qua* martyrs. Nowhere in the codex is there a reading for someone venerated as or because they were a *virgo*—this was simply not a current liturgical category.

At least one other eighth-century liturgical manuscript also bears witness to the existence, by that time, of common readings. An early to mid-eighth-century lectionary from the Würzburg area, the surviving portion of what was once a complete sacramentary, offers both pericopes and performance instructions for feasts designated by generic categories of saints such as confessors, martyrs and virgins.¹⁶ This lectionary includes no proper feasts. Furthermore, the common readings were meant to cover both male and female saints, with no distinction

¹⁵ Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f. 68. See Hans Thurn, *Die Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg*, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1970–1993), vol. 3.1, *Die Pergamenthandschriften der ehemaligen Dombibliothek Würzburg* (1984), pp. 54–56.

¹⁶ Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.q. 32. See Thurn, *Die Handschriften*, vol. 3.1, pp. 106–107.

of sex or gender. Strikingly, one of the recommended readings for the feast of a virgin appears to gender virginity as a specifically masculine state; it is certainly more suited for the feast of a male virgin than a female one. The text in question is 1 Corinthians 7:25–27, in which Paul asserts the general principle that every man should stay as he is: if a man is married, he should stay with his wife, because it is good for a man to be bound to a wife, but if a man does not already have a wife, then it is better for him not to marry. In contrast, the recommended epistle pericope for a confessor has an inclusive, universalizing cast. The passage is Romans 9:22–26, in which Paul asserts that God has called a new people (implying men as well as women) from among the Jews and also from among the gentiles.

The Birth of the Liturgical Virgo, the Birth of the Ideological Virgo

The standardized categories of saints found in Christian litanies from the ninth century and later clearly did not develop ‘naturally’, organically and inevitably out of widespread—let alone universal—eighth-century liturgical traditions. It is neither possible nor necessary to pinpoint the precise moment and location of the birth of the liturgical *virgo*. It is, however, possible to pinpoint at least one of the motors of dissemination of the generic concept of the sainted female *virgo*, namely Gelasian sacramentaries.¹⁷ During the 770s, there was a great burst of liturgical activity and creativity at the male Benedictine monastery of Flavigny in Burgundy.¹⁸ I have recently argued that one person who received training as a liturgist at Flavigny during the 770s was Witiza-Benedict, the future abbot of Aniane and dominant figure in the Carolingian reform movement early in the reign of Louis the Pious. He was at the time a monk of the adjacent house of Saint-Seine, but would eventually be in a position to translate his own preferences into legislation enforceable in all the territories under Frankish control.¹⁹

The monks of Flavigny appear to have created the archetype of a sacramentary type known as the Frankish Gelasian. No precise witness

¹⁷ Bernard Moreton, *The Eighth-Century Gelasian Sacramentary: A Study in Tradition* (Oxford, 1976).

¹⁸ Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481–751* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 43–60, especially 50–55.

¹⁹ Felice Lifshitz, *The Name of the Saint: The Martyrology of Jerome and Access to the Sacred in Francia, 627–827* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2005), pp. 58–61.

of their original creation survives, but a number of descendants, all of which vary from one another, do survive from around 800 onwards. In my view, the best witness to the Flavigny original is the Sacramentary of Autun, due to the constant and intimate connections between the vacant see of Autun and the house of Flavigny, whose abbots fulfilled episcopal functions at Autun throughout the eighth century.²⁰

A sacramentary is an encyclopedic liturgical manuscript. Sacramentaries were not blueprints to be followed completely, but rather extensive compendia of potential practices on which users could draw, for example by selecting from multiple versions of the baptismal rite, or from multiple versions of the most popular intercessory prayers (against drought, in time of war, for the dead). Sacramentaries also provided detailed instructions for the performance of the mass. The Sacramentary of Autun boasts multiple sets of commons masses. There are several for ‘apostles’ and several for ‘confessors’, with the additional title, ‘pontiff’, in the body of the office to limit it to particular men. There are several for ‘martyrs’, with the body of the office either in the masculine singular or the masculine plural, and some with the additional title, ‘pontiff’, in the text; several for ‘saints’, with the body of the office either in the masculine singular or the masculine plural; and several for ‘virgins’, with the body of the office in the feminine singular or the feminine plural. Yet, the body of the office for a saint celebrated generically as a *virgo* commemorates the women as ‘martyrs’. Here we see the liturgical *virgo*, that problematic and illogical figure who *is* a martyr like her male colleagues but who is labelled and celebrated as a virgin, something she may or may not actually be.

There is no generic framework in the Sacramentary of Autun within which to celebrate a female saint who is not a martyr, even one who was technically a corporeal virgin, since the only common text available referred to martyrdom. The sacramentary does contain proper masses for individual non-martyred females, which could perhaps have been adapted for the veneration of other female saints; such a transfer, however, is neither encouraged nor facilitated by the striking absence of a suitable common mass. This absence is particularly significant in that the ostensible point of the sacramentary genre was to provide a

²⁰ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Phillips 1667. See *Liber Sacramentorum Augustodunensis*, ed. Odilo Heiming (Turnhout, 1984); Emile Thevenot, *Autun, Cité romaine et chrétienne: histoire—monuments—sites* (Autun, 1932), pp. 134–38; and Jean Régnier, *Les Evêques d'Autun* (Le Poirée-sur-Vie [Vendée], 1988), p. 44.

repertoire of possible liturgical rites, and therefore obviate the need for constant local invention. For instance, the sacramentary already includes *ordines* for the ordination of both abbots and abbesses, complete with the proper grammatical gendered forms in the body of the text, so that the celebrant could simply read the manuscript aloud. Yet the only category provided for the celebration of the memory of holy women was the liturgical *virgo*, that is, the female martyr by another, obfuscatory name.

Rather than fulfilling all the potential needs of celebrants, the Sacramentary of Autun actually created a problem for them. Celebrants, liturgists and scribes could choose either to ignore the problem or to solve it themselves. In the case of the church of Autun around 800, the local clergy faced and solved the dilemma created by their sacramentary by adding a supplement to the core Flavigny compendium, which consisted of a series of additions to the various common masses found in all the Frankish Gelasian sacramentaries. These additions included a common mass for holy widows and one for God's maidservants (*ancillae dei*). They likewise extended their litany beyond what they must have found in their Flavigny model²¹ by calling, at the end of the list, on all unnamed holy widows (*vidue*) and on members of the mysterious category, *advene*.²² The liturgical *virgo* was therefore immediately recognized

²¹ The saints' name litanies in the eighth-century Gelasian sacramentaries are among the oldest extant continental examples of the form; inclusion of a saints' name litany appears to go back to the original Flavigny compilation. The litany in one Flavigny descendant of the 790s, the Sacramentary of Gellone (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 12048, fol. 184r), lists only twelve names of exclusively male saints. For this manuscript, see *Liber Sacramentorum Gellonense*, introduced by J. Deshusses (Turnhout, 1981) and *Liber Sacramentorum Gellonensis*, ed. A. Dumas (Turnhout, 1981). The litany in the Sacramentary of Autun (fols. 44v–45v) lists fifty-seven male saints, with no internal groupings or labels. Then, in a formulation that normally marks the end of the list, the litany evokes "all the angels, archangels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins." The presence of this (normally concluding) statement after the list of men's names in the Sacramentary of Autun, combined with the evidence of the entirely male list in the Sacramentary of Gellone, suggests that the original Flavigny model litany contained only the names of male saints, and that everything after this point in the Sacramentary of Autun represents the original contribution of the Autunois liturgist, working around 800, who also added the supplementary masses. After the summary statement, the litany in the Sacramentary of Autun continues with the names of eleven female saints, which like the men's names are neither grouped nor labelled, followed by a general invocation of *vidue* and *advene*.

²² It is unclear what is meant in this context by 'strangers' or 'foreigners', two possible translations of *advene*, a label which does not appear in any other litany from the period. The connotations of the term are reasonably clear in the general context of Christian sainthood, in the sense that *advene* would presumably have lived as if dead

as an inadequate designation for actual practice, but would nevertheless go on to become the standard category under which to celebrate female sanctity. The liturgical *virgo* is therefore the very the epitome of an ideological, as opposed to a logical, category.

The Function of the Liturgical Virgo

The invention and above all the reception of the liturgical *virgo* around 800 and after must be connected with certain aspects of the Carolingian ecclesiastical reform movement. Throughout the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, male ecclesiastical legislators repeatedly attempted to keep consecrated women separated from 'the world'.²³ For centuries, this male ecclesiastical goal had been pursued almost exclusively through legislative efforts and had met with very limited success. During the Carolingian Reform era, the anti-women faction not only gained support from the ruling dynasty but also added a new, innovative strategy to its tactical arsenal: a second offensive front in the liturgical arena.

Before the ninth century, there were many ways for women to be professionally religious, many of which were not in any way monastic: they could be consecrated as widows and/or virgins who set up in their own home, as deaconesses, canonesses and the like. The many forms of women's professional spirituality were largely derived from the apostolic church and all included active community roles.²⁴ The attack on active, non-monastic consecrated women was not only about their 'lifestyles' in a private home or a regulated community, but also and probably primarily about their ecclesiastical activities. What most incensed the bishops was the involvement of women in the performance of the mass.²⁵ In the eighth century, women in Francia fulfilled many sacral functions, serving at altar and performing a number of religious offices, and success in driving them out of this sphere did not come

to, as if merely passing quickly through, this world, while focusing their hopes and aspirations on paradise. Nevertheless, such an orientation is normally ascribed to all saints rather than to any particular subgroup of saints.

²³ The most pointed synthetic treatment of this problem is Donald Hochstetler, *A Conflict of Traditions: Women in Religion in the Early Middle Ages, 500–840* (Lanham, Md., 1992).

²⁴ Hochstetler, *Conflict of Traditions*, pp. 63–64.

²⁵ For the evidence for women's involvement in the mass, see Hochstetler, *Conflict of Traditions*, pp. 99–104.

overnight: legislation against women in priestly roles was still being newly formulated as late as 829.

The leading men of the Carolingian-era reform movement were hardly died-in-the-wool misogynists; indeed, in most spheres they expressed resoundingly positive views of women as wives, mothers and Christians.²⁶ But they were hostile to women's sacramental activities, and desired to define professionally religious women as qualitatively different from professionally religious men. This required the invention of an ideological label for the women, one which would permit no easy overlap with the categories of men. That label was *virgo*.

The reform project required that, in the sacred contexts in which litanies were recited, women's names not regularly appear on the lists of saintly ecclesiastical professionals scattered in among the names of men, in mixed groups labelled as apostles and martyrs and confessors. Even a 'grouped' but non-labelled list of names might have encouraged readers and listeners to assimilate the female saints to the male ones. The manipulation of litanies and of other aspects of the liturgical rites associated with the cult of saints, such as the offices in sacramentaries, formed only a small part of the male ecclesiastical battle against their female rivals. But this liturgical terrain was crucial because it was so highly significant, in that it was precisely the ritual arena that certain male clerics were most concerned to define as a woman-free zone.²⁷ Furthermore, it was also the territory over which male clerics increasingly exercised control, and where female clerics became increasingly powerless. In the course of the Carolingian reform, the liturgy became the home playing field of the male clerical elite. The more they alienated women from the liturgy, the more they were able to create a liturgy which itself reinforced gender segregation and women's exclusion from that liturgy.

Gender Trouble

The liturgical *virgo* was certainly a powerful ideological tool, and came to dominate liturgical thinking about female sanctity. The category *virgo*

²⁶ Katrien Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood and Woman in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt, 1997).

²⁷ See the essays (all with extensive notes and bibliographical references) collected in Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, eds., *Women's Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany, 2005).

also typifies a potentially pernicious way of thinking about women, namely, as if they formed a homogeneous, almost monolithic, solid interest block. This phenomenon has been most profoundly analyzed by Judith Butler, who has advocated placing the word ‘women’ in quotation marks in order to underline the extent to which that category is itself an ideological creation.²⁸ For Butler, ‘women’ are not a preexistent category that can hope for relief from sexist oppression through the liberating mechanism of the law; instead, she argues that ‘women’ is a category created by the male-dominated law, precisely with the intention of controlling, limiting and indeed oppressing the persons so defined. Such approaches have come increasingly under attack from some feminist scholars, who see in the poststructuralist annihilation of the subject and denial of ontological reality to ‘women’ as a group a dangerous retreat from the commitment to pro-woman activism which they consider central to their own callings.²⁹ Yet Butler’s ideas concerning ‘women’ in general have been relatively successfully applied to patristic authors,³⁰ and her central argument that ‘women’ is a category constituted *by the law* rather than by nature and biology is extremely useful for analyzing the narrow eighth-century category of the liturgical *virgo*.

Previous scholarship has meticulously catalogued the centuries of ecclesiastical legislation designed to keep consecrated women separated from the world, such as by forbidding them from going on pilgrimages to Rome or elsewhere.³¹ However, just to comb through centuries of legislation and catalogue the restrictions and advantages to which ‘women’ were subject in an ecclesiastical context may well miss the main impact of that legislation (as Butler has sensitized us to see it), namely: how the

²⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), especially pp. 2–3.

²⁹ See, most pointedly, Joan Hoff, “Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis,” *Women’s History Review* 3 (1994), 149–68; and her “Reassertion of Patriarchy at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri, eds., *Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, the Political, the Professional* (Bloomington, Ind., 1999), pp. 102–19. See also the essays collected in Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, 1999).

³⁰ Elizabeth A. Clark, “Ideology, History and the Construction of ‘Woman’ in Late Antique Christianity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), 155–84; reprinted in *Christianity and Society: The Social World of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York, 1999), pp. 1–30. For the contrast between Patristic and Carolingian-era men’s writings on women, see Heene, *Legacy of Paradise*, pp. 261–63.

³¹ As decreed by the Council of Fréjus in 796/797. See Hochstetler, *Conflict of Traditions*, p. 37.

repeated legislation itself was constitutive of the category consecrated 'women'. Canon law between the sixth and the ninth centuries did not legislate for or about a recognized, pre-existent group of consecrated 'women' who could easily recognize themselves and be recognized by others as subject to a particular set of gender-based strictures. Professionally religious women, like professionally religious men, surely saw themselves as occupying a range of positions along the spectrum of monastic and clerical vocations. While the diversity of male vocations was recognized and legitimated in the multiple litany categories into which male saints were divided, the diversity of female vocations was denied and erased by blanket legislation for a purportedly monolithic group of 'women' and by the category of the liturgical *virgo*.

Yet, the lives of religious women and of women saints did vary, and were not reducible to a single word or category. This fact could not be denied, in part because women continued to be active in the production and transmission of knowledge about saints in non-liturgical spheres. The liturgical *virgo* was not welcome outside of liturgical instruments, especially in narrative frameworks. Narrative representations of the Christian past continuously harassed the liturgical *virgo*, and surely created some moments of cognitive dissonance during sacred moments as the congregation's historical knowledge of heroic female saints clashed with the implications of the litany categories. The existence of competing visions of saintly categorization, incompatible with the liturgical *virgo*, and indeed also with the tightly contained consecrated 'woman', can be illustrated through any number of narrative texts.

A first example is a collection of saints' lives from the first third of the ninth century.³² We can ask what, if any, generic impression of female sanctity would be gained from reading, consulting or listening to readings from this manuscript. I would argue that anyone reading or hearing the many stories of male and female martyrs would conclude that male and female sanctity were virtually identical and therefore non-gendered phenomena. Across the eighty or so folios devoted to the heroics of male martyrs, and the fifty or so folios devoted to the

³² The manuscript is now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 10861. It may have been produced at Christ Church, Canterbury or in a related southern English women's scriptorium, such as Minster-in-Thanel or Winchcombe, or somewhere on the continent with connections to those insular institutions. See Michelle P. Brown, "Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 10861 and the Scriptorium of Christ Church, Canterbury," *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986), 119–37.

heroics of female martyrs, the very same words recur in and dominate the linguistic landscape: *martyr*, *martyrium*, and all of their variants. The story of the martyrdom of Eufemia is, in terms of basic narrative structure, indistinguishable from the story of the martyrdom of Philip the Apostle. Both live at a time when Roman imperial officials issue an edict requiring everyone to sacrifice publicly to the god Mars. The text implies that women ‘count’ in the public space of civic ritual, for there are no special explanations to elucidate why Eufemia, like Philip before her, makes her way to the public square in order to proclaim before the assembled crowds her refusal to obey the law. Both Philip and Eufemia engage in repeated public debates and dialogues with various representatives of imperial authority. Eufemia, in fact, is the leader of a large group of obstinate Christians; it is she who speaks, sings and psalmodises for all of them. Her marital and corporeal statuses are never mentioned; only her status as the leader of the group of martyrs is specified. The word *virgo* appears nowhere in her story, nor in the stories of most of the other women commemorated in the codex. Anyone who knew Eufemia’s story, at least from this manuscript, would inevitably locate her among the martyrs in any mental litany.³³

As a second example, let us consider a collection of the lives of eight female saints produced during the mid to late ninth century, perhaps at Echternach or else somewhere in what is now northern France.³⁴ At Echternach in the tenth century, a table of contents was added whose categories reflect both the insufficiencies of the liturgical *virgo* and the fact that the variety of female saintly experience was widely recognized.³⁵ Brigida, Dorothy and Juliana are labelled as *virgines*; Afra is labelled as a martyr; Eufemia, Matrona and Eugenia are labelled as *virgines et martyres*; Felicitas (with her seven children) is labelled as a *femina*. There was clearly still both a desire and a will to assess and to label women individually, including as martyrs, despite the dominance of the ideological *virgo* in the liturgy in general and in litanies in particular.

³³ It may be significant that the title of her passion narrative (*passio sancti eufemiae*) genders her as male (lat. 10861, fol. 88r).

³⁴ The collection of biographies currently forms folios 1–83 of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 10862.

³⁵ For the palimpsest table of contents, see Jean-Claude Muller, “Echternacher Handschriften des 10. Jahrhunderts,” in *Lateinische Kultur im X Jahrhundert: Akten des I Internationalen Mittellateiner-Kongresses Heidelberg 1988*, ed. Walter Berschin (Stuttgart, 1991).

Around 800, a generic category of consecrated or holy ‘women’ was constituted by the law and reinforced by the liturgy, but was resisted in and subverted by the far more flexible and far less male-dominated, less official spheres of narrative and literature. As long as women and men saw religious and holy women as belonging to a spectrum, rather than as a monolithic group—and we can tell from narrative sources that they did—restrictive anti-women legislation could never be completely enforced, given the inevitable uncertainty concerning which women were subject to the legislation. Nevertheless, despite certain limits on its effectiveness, the ideological category of the liturgical *virgo* was powerful enough to support the legislative programmes of ecclesiastical reformers who, from the ninth century, successfully pushed consecrated women out of Christian sacred space in Latin Europe.

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LOCATING SANCTITY

The pair of studies that comprise this second section demonstrate that during the later Middle Ages, sanctity could be 'located' in the geographical sense of places of the cult, and also symbolically through architectural design. Both authors pursue case studies of these phenomena in medieval Scotland. In "Saint Triduana of Restalrig? Locating a Saint and Her Cult in Late Medieval Lothian and Beyond," Helen Brown investigates one of the best-documented locations of a late medieval cult devoted to a Scottish saint, the relic chapel of St. Triduana, a shrine that attracted royal patronage and wide public interest from the 1480s until the Reformation. By examining the evidence for and nature of St. Triduana's cult, the author problematizes its original geographical location. Lessons for Triduana's feast in the 1510 Aberdeen Breviary identify the saint as a companion of St. Rule, a holy virgin who lived in Atholl and died in Restalrig. However, there is little evidence of a Triduana cult at Restalrig before the later fifteenth century, and although the presence of her relics appears central to the eventual relocation of the cult to this place, there is no explicit evidence of a translation or invention. Despite its obscure early history, the cult's success is revealed and explained in relation to the power of royal patronage, the relics' proven efficacy, and St. Triduana's significance in Scottish national history.

Although none of the medieval Scottish churches that housed significant saints' cults followed the lead of the great European pilgrimage churches in constructing complex multi-chapeled chevets in which to display relics, there is clear evidence that the architectural designs of many of them were designed to facilitate pilgrim access to shrines and other foci associated with the cult. A number of different solutions to the problem of locating sanctity within medieval Scottish architectural space are analyzed by Richard Fawcett in "The Architectural Framework for the Cult of the Saints: Some Scottish Examples." At its simplest, this framework could be a single dedicated space, as at Paisley Abbey, where a chapel off the end of the south transept contained the altar, and presumably the shrine, of St. Mirren. Elsewhere, such as at Dunfermline Abbey and Glasgow Cathedral, allowance was made for a number of foci, with care being taken to ensure that the *opus dei* within the presbytery and choir was not disturbed by the pilgrims. A number of other Scottish churches that housed relics, including the chapel of St. Triduana, reveal the range of architectural solutions adopted for

public access, including later changes and additions required by the developing cults. The collective evidence suggests that by using a variable architectural typology, medieval Scottish designers provided visual guides to sanctity that played an essential role in the emotional and religious experiences of contemporary pilgrims.

SAINT TRIDUANA OF RESTALRIG?
LOCATING A SAINT AND HER CULT IN LATE MEDIEVAL
LOTHIAN AND BEYOND

Helen Brown*

“*Qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur: non enim qui seipsum commendat ille probatus est: sed quem Deus commenda*” (“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved; but he, whom God commendeth”).¹ These words of St. Paul, highlighted in the Office for a Virgin not Martyred, warn of the historian’s limits. Medieval Christians believed that it is God alone who makes saints: all that can be done by those on earth is to acclaim sanctity when they see it. How and why certain bearers of his commendation have been recognised and culted in the life of Christendom, however, is a proper field of investigation for the historian; and one which, as shown in a flourishing historiography, has considerable light to shed on many aspects of medieval culture. This study is an investigation of one particular cult, that of St. Triduana of Restalrig in Scotland. Although necessarily limited in scope, the examination of this cult may add to our understanding of the perception of sanctity in late medieval Scotland, an area where the cult of the saints remains relatively under-explored.

Although saints feature quite prominently in the growing historiography of medieval Scotland, their role during the later Middle Ages has received relatively less attention, and until recently, scholarly examination has focused on the persons and careers of native Scottish saints rather than their cults.² Since almost all native saints were alive before the kingdom of Scotland was in any way recognisable, such

* I am extremely grateful to Alasdair MacDonald for his helpful correspondence and extensive comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

¹ 2 Cor. 10:17–18 (trans. Douay-Rheims ed. of the Bible); *Capitulum* for First and Second Vespers, Lauds and Terce of the Common of a Virgin not Martyred, *Breviarium Aberdonense*, 2 vols., ed. William Blew (Edinburgh, 1854), Pars Estiva, Psalterium, fol. 108v (Aberdeen Breviary, facsimile edition). This is the Common used for St. Triduana.

² Thomas Owen Clancy, “Columba, Adomnán and the Cult of Saints in Scotland,” in *Spes Scotorum: Hope of Scots: Saints Columba, Iona and Scotland*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy and Dauvit Broun (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 3–33, esp. p. 5. See also Alan MacQuarrie, *The Saints of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1997), which focuses on saints rather than cults.

investigations have involved the later Middle Ages only indirectly. These later centuries have been of interest more as a period of textual copying and adaptation, including, crucially, the compilation of the Aberdeen Breviary, which contains the only extant narrative material concerning many Scottish saints.³ No new Scottish saints were canonised between 1250 and 1976, making Scotland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appear barren in comparison to the early medieval landscape with its lush crop of holy men, as well as behind the times relative to the ‘new’ sainthood seen elsewhere.⁴ Evidence for how Scots did encounter and perceive sanctity during this period is moreover extremely scarce. In recent years, however, historiographical focus has begun to broaden, drawing renewed attention to the unavoidable presence of saints in later medieval Scottish life. It is particularly worth noting Simon Taylor’s careful unearthing of St. Fillan’s cult, John Higgitt’s valuable Whithorn lecture on pictorial images of saints, and Robert Bartlett’s recent edition of the miracles of Saints Ebbe and Margaret.⁵

In modern Scotland, St. Triduana is not among the high-profile Scottish saints; she does not enjoy the acknowledgement accorded—among both Catholics and Protestants, if in different forms—to Columba, Ninian, Kentigern and Margaret.⁶ For two or three generations in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, however, Triduana—known in Scots as Tredwell or Tridwall—was at the forefront of devotional fashion.⁷ Her relics were housed in a chapel built by Kings James III and IV, and pieces of them were sought by others; chaplainries were

³ As in n. 1, above.

⁴ See André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1981), vol. 1, pt. 2, especially map after p. 322, pp. 154–58, and pp. 427–28 on St. Margaret, the only papally-canonised medieval Scottish saint.

⁵ Simon Taylor, “The Cult of St. Fillan in Scotland,” in *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas R. Liszka and Lorna E.M. Walker (Dublin, 2001); John Higgitt, “*Imageis Maid With Mennis Hand*”: *Saints, Images, Belief and Identity in Later Medieval Scotland*, Ninth Whithorn Lecture (Whithorn, 2003); *The Miracles of St Aebbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2003). See also Audrey-Beth Fitch, “Power Through Purity: The Virgin Martyrs and Women’s Salvation in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” in *Women in Scotland c. 1100–c. 1750*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen Meikle (East Linton, 1999); Peter Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London, 1999); and David Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe* (East Linton, 2001), 1:57–73.

⁶ Triduana is noted in David Hugh Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th ed. (Oxford, 2003).

⁷ As is clear from various sixteenth-century references, such as ‘Sanct Tredwellis Ile’. See *Charters of the Hospital of Soltre, of Trinity College, Edinburgh, and other Collegiate Churches in Midlothian*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1861) [hereafter cited as Midl. Chrs], pp. lv–lvi (1576).

dedicated to her, and pictorial images were made of her. The cult of St. Triduana of Restalrig was possibly active by around 1450. It was certainly established by 1496 at the latest, and it flourished until the Reformation. Although, as we shall see, this was certainly connected to considerably earlier awareness of a St. Triduana, the pre-Reformation cult focused at Restalrig seems to be an essentially new development. Moreover, there are very few such new cults that can be identified in late medieval Scotland. St. Triduana's cult therefore offers a valuable indication of the type—or at least one type—of sanctity that appealed to Scots at this time.

James III and IV's collegiate church at Restalrig has already been the subject of two important articles by Ian MacIvor and Alasdair MacDonald, on which this chapter draws for all material concerning the royal building project. MacDonald has also considered the significance of Restalrig in the context of royal patronage, and has made some suggestions about the person of Triduana. However, certain significant discontinuities within the records of Triduana's cult, and the interest of the cult as an indicator of devotional trends beyond royal circles, have yet to be fully drawn out.⁸ The present study will therefore examine the cult of St. Triduana in further detail by outlining her cult at Restalrig, considering some of the problems with the narrative of her life as established in connection with the Restalrig location, and finally by illustrating the growth of the cult and suggesting some possible reasons for its success.

The life of St. Triduana of Restalrig is known only from the six lessons for Matins of her feast (8 October) in the Aberdeen Breviary of 1510.⁹ According to these lessons, Triduana was among the companions of St. Rule, the Greek monk who brought the relics of St. Andrew

⁸ Ian MacIvor, "The King's Chapel at Restalrig and St Triduana's Aisle: A Hexagonal Two-Storeyed Chapel of the Fifteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 96 (1962–1963), 247–63; A.A. MacDonald, "The Chapel of Restalrig: Royal Folly or Venerable Shrine?" in *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen, A.A. MacDonald, and S.L. Mapstone (Leuven, 2000); idem, "The Legend of St Triduana: Piety at the Interface of Pictish and Early Germanic Cultures," in *Current Research in Dutch and Belgian Universities and Polytechnics on Old English, Middle English and Historical Linguistics: Papers read at the Twenty-third Research Symposium held in Utrecht on 14 December 2001*, ed. H. Lemmen (Utrecht, 2002). I am grateful to Michael Lynch for providing me with a copy of the latter article.

⁹ *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Estiva, Proprium Sanctorum, fols. 122v–123r (8 October). For an English translation, see MacDonald, "The Chapel of Restalrig."

to Scotland in the fourth century. Once in Scotland, she and two companions, Emeria and Potentia, began a holy life at Rescobie in Forfarshire, which was threatened by the attentions of King Nechtan. Nechtan, inflamed by desire, attempted to press his suit, causing Triduana to relocate to Atholl. His envoys, however, caught up with her. In a blackly comic exchange, Triduana asked what it was that their king so desired of her. “The outstanding beauty of your eyes (*excellentissimam oculorum tuorum speciem*),” was their reply; to which she responded, “What he seeks of me, he shall have.” Turning away, she plucked out her own eyes and presented them, impaled on a bodkin, to the messengers. Once Nechtan received this unambiguous communication, his loathing for such steadfastness turned into admiration (*Rex vero immobilem beate virginis constanciam ammiratus/quam prius habuit in odium/vertit in amorem*). Triduana, for reasons unexplained, relocated again, this time to Restalrig in Lothian, where she died.

The *lectiones* also describe two posthumous miracles attributed to St. Triudana’s intercession. A blind Englishwoman had been traveling around saints’ shrines in a search of a cure. Eventually she had a dream in which Triduana instructed her to visit the saint’s tomb at Restalrig in Scotland. This proved effective. The poor woman was, however, later afflicted again when her young daughter fell from an upper-storey window and was killed or very badly hurt, including the extrusion of her eyes. The woman begged Triduana’s intercession, and the child was healed.

Evidence of devotion to Triduana in late medieval Scotland first appears in several Scottish liturgical books of the mid to late fifteenth century, where she appears in calendars for the first time.¹⁰ She was at this time apparently not among the standard Scottish saints known outside of the kingdom, for she does not appear in surviving Books of Hours produced on the continent for the Scottish market. She is included in a special commission made around 1498 for Dean Brown of Aberdeen, but her name is absent from the generic, quasi mass-

¹⁰ The Fowlis Easter Breviary (after 1437 and probably before 1456) is probably the earliest of these: *Breviarium Bothanum sive Portiforium secundum usum ecclesiae cujusdam in Scotia, Printed from a Manuscript owned by John, Marquess of Bute, KT* (London, 1900), pp. vi, 308. The Glenorchy Psalter (after 1450): London, British Library, Egerton MS 2899, fol. 5v. The Arbuthnott Missal (1491): *Liber Ecclesie Beati Terrenani de Arbuthnott: Missale secundum usum Ecclesiae Sancti Andreae in Scotia*, ed. A.P. Forbes (Burntisland, Fife, 1864), p. cxii. Triduana does not appear in the Calendar of Fearn, written by 1471 (*Calendar of New Fearn: Text and Additions, 1471–1667*, ed. R.J. Adam [Edinburgh, 1991]).

produced volumes adapted for Scots' tastes by a seasoning of Scottish saints.¹¹

Triduana's cult at Restalrig first becomes visible a little later, probably in the 1470s and certainly in the 1490s. Restalrig is today a suburban area of northeast Edinburgh, near the port of Leith. In the fifteenth century, Restalrig—more commonly written *Lestabrig* or *Lestalyrk*—was a parish and barony in the hands of the Logans of Restalrig. The Logans acquired the barony from the de Lestalyrk family at some point in the later fourteenth century, probably by marriage but possibly also in connection with Sir Robert Logan's service to Robert III.¹² The barony had a close relationship to the nearby burgh of Edinburgh, for South Leith, where the burgh held rights over the harbour, was in Restalrig barony and under its lord's baronial jurisdiction. Rectors of Restalrig parish church are sporadically documented from the twelfth century onwards. The church was in the patronage of the Logan family certainly by 1433 and probably earlier.¹³

King James III began to take an unprecedented royal interest in this church by 1477, when we learn he had founded an altar in the 'upper

¹¹ For Dean Brown's commission, see David McRoberts, "Dean Brown's Book of Hours," *Innes Review* 19 (1968), pp. 156, 158, 166–67. Surviving examples of the more generic books produced for Scottish buyers include the Playfair Hours (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library KRP.A.26 [formerly L.475–1918]); see Rowan Watson, *The Playfair Hours: a Late Fifteenth-Century Illuminated Manuscript from Rouen* (London, 1984); the Yester Hours (Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys Library 1576); and two Books of Hours housed today in the Edinburgh University Library (MSS 42 and 43).

¹² Logan travelled in England on royal business: see safe-conducts in *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati*, 2 vols, ed. David Macpherson, et al. (London, 1814–19), 2:127a (1395), 2:129 (1395), 2:130a (1395), 2:134a (1396), 2:144 (1398). On expenses paid for such travel, see *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 23 vols., ed. J. Stuart, et al. (Edinburgh, 1878–1908) [hereafter cited as ER], 3:398, 402.

Logan's marriage is mysterious. Logan had a wife named Catherine whose family is unknown; she may have been the heiress to Restalrig (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. 34.5.5, fol. 4v; ER 4:clxvi, 592; *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, 16 vols., ed. W. Bliss et al. [London, 1893–1994], 8:164 [hereafter cited as CPL]). In the *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (11 vols., ed. John Maitland Thomson, et al. [Edinburgh, 1882–1914] [hereafter cited as RMS]), 2:1411), Robert III addresses Logan as his 'brother', suggesting a marriage to a sister of the king. However, there is a Somerville family tradition that he married a Somerville named Egidia. See W. Douglas, "The Armorial Tombstone of Lady Janet Ker at Restalrig, 1596," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 62 (1927–1928), pp. 28–29; James 11th Lord Somerville, *Memorie of the Somervilles; being A History of the Baronial House of Somerville*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1815), 1:169.

¹³ Ian B. Cowan, *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1967), pp. 170–71.

chapel' of the parish church of St. Mary of Restalrig.¹⁴ That the site was of peculiar significance may be indicated in what may be a reference to Restalrig by Hector Boece in his *Lives of the Bishops of Aberdeen*: James III is reported to have gone on pilgrimage with the papal legate who was in Scotland in 1486. Such an interpretation of this reference depends on the identification of James's destination, given in Latin as *Lestauream*, with the Scots Lestalrik or Restalrig, an identification that is probable although not conclusive.¹⁵ By this time, James had already begun his own project at Restalrig, moving beyond the parish church. In 1487 he was granted papal licence to erect "the church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the limits of the parish church and place of Restalrig" into a secular college with a dean and a 'suitable number' of canons, and to appropriate Lasswade parish church to the new church's *capitular mensa*.¹⁶ Restalrig parochial revenues were untouched; it seems from then on that the king's chapel and college were institutionally quite separate from the parish church. Furthermore, the college was usually described as being next to, rather than in, the parish church. An entry in the exchequer rolls of 1486–7 shows that building work was underway, as £10 16s were paid to a mason for stone slabs "for the lord king's chapel next to (*contiguam*) the parish church of Restalrig."¹⁷ The building which resulted was an unusual one: a two-storeyed, hexagonal chapel at the southwest corner of Restalrig parish church.¹⁸

James III did not manage to endow the college before he died in June 1488. It was not until 1511–1512 that his son, James IV, provided endowments for eight prebends. Only in James V's minority, in 1515, was the college's organisation put into its final form, with a dean and nine prebendaries. How fully functioning the college's liturgical provision was between 1487 and 1515 is unknown. There was certainly more than one priest serving in Restalrig—whether in the parish church or

¹⁴ "In ecclesia parochiali dicte beatissime Marie Virginis de Lestalrig ad altare per nos fundatum in predicta ecclesia in capella superiori eiusdem" (RMS 2:1329; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, C2/8, no. 62).

¹⁵ Hector Boece, *Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium Episcoporum Vitae*, ed. and trans. James Moir (Aberdeen, 1894), pp. 76, 155.

¹⁶ Midl. Chrs, pp. 273–76; CPL 14:211–14.

¹⁷ ER 9:540.

¹⁸ The exact arrangement of the buildings is puzzling, but as architecture is not the concern of this paper, nothing will be added here to MacIvor and MacDonald's discussions (see n. 8, above). For more recent observations about the Restalrig chapel, see Richard Fawcett's chapter in this volume.

chapel is not clear—when on 14 September 1496, the king sent 20s to “the priestis” of Restalrig for “a trental of Masses before Our Lady.” The record of this payment in the treasurer’s accounts also provides the first statement of Triduana’s Restalrig connection, indicated by 20s sent for a trental “before Sanct Triduane.”¹⁹ The dean’s benefice was also in place: Lasswade’s rectory and a small grant of land ferms had apparently provided a livelihood for Master John Frisel, the first dean, who had been named in the petition of 1487.²⁰ Frisel seems to have been the model graduate civil servant. He served among the Lords Auditor of Causes and Complaints, and as a Lord of Council in civil cases, between 1488 and 1496, service duly rewarded with the bishopric of Ross in 1497.²¹ Frisel retained an interest in Restalrig after his promotion: a royal letter of September 1507 refers to the “chaplainry of St. Triduana, newly founded in St. Triduana’s aisle within the church of Restalrig by the late . . . John, bishop of Ross.”²² This is the first known use of the phrase, ‘St. Triduana’s aisle’ to describe part of the chapel.

In 1510, the Aberdeen Breviary was published with its narration of Triduana’s death and burial at Restalrig. The presence of the relics is finally confirmed in the refoundation charter of 1515, which specifies that the “prebendary of St. Triduana’s aisle” was to maintain the lower aisle of the church and St. Triduana’s altar therein, and to receive any offerings made at St. Triduana’s altar and relics.²³ The Aberdeen Martyrology, a manuscript of the 1550s, also notes that Triduana is celebrated at Restalrig, where “honourably buried at the Chapel Royal she shines with miracles.”²⁴

There is no doubt, then, about Triduana’s place at Restalrig by the end of the fifteenth century. The question which naturally arises

¹⁹ *Compta Thesaurariorum Regum Scotorum: Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, 13 vols., ed. Thomas Dickson et al. (Edinburgh, 1877–1978) [hereafter cited as TA], 1:296.

²⁰ ER 10:332; see also 10:408–409, 494.

²¹ Leslie Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland, 1431–1514: The Struggle for Order* (Aberdeen, 1985), pp. 421–22; D.E.R. Watt and A.L. Murray, eds., *Fasti Ecclesiae Scotticanae Medii Aevi ad annum 1638*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 350, 482.

²² *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, 8 vols., ed. M. Livingstone, et al. (Edinburgh, 1908–1982) [hereafter cited as RSS], 1:1539, 12 Sept. 1507. Frisel had died on 1 May 1507 (RSS 1:1469).

²³ Midl. Chrs, p. 282.

²⁴ “Apud Iestalrig . . . honorifice apud capellam regiam sepulta miraculis claret” (Edinburgh, University Library 50, fol. 91v [8 Id. Oct.]).

after reviewing this evidence is why James III developed his interest in Restalrig. As Alasdair MacDonald has argued, it is difficult to see any reason other than the presence of the saint.²⁵ Why, then, should James—and his son after him—have acquired a new devotion to a saint who, according to the lessons for her feast, since her death in the fourth century was believed to lie at Restalrig? What can be said about her cult before royal investment in it? Closer consideration of Triduana's life as represented in the Aberdeen Breviary *lectiones* does not wholly clarify James III's role, but it does signal certain problems of continuity within the Triduana tradition. These problems demonstrate that the liturgical text of 1510 cannot constitute a unified narrative but rather draws on several strands of tradition.

While the presence of Triduana's relics at Restalrig is the most concretely identifiable aspect of her cult at the end of the Middle Ages, it is also possibly its most problematic within a longer-term view of her cult. This is because there is simply no clear evidence to locate Triduana or any other saint at Restalrig before the late fifteenth century. If Triduana had been known for centuries to lie at Restalrig, it is curious that her shrine during the later period was in so obscure a position as outside and to the southwest of the parish church, rather than already incorporated into the church in some way. Moreover, the name of the Blessed Virgin seems to have been more prominent than that of Triduana in connection with Restalrig. The parish church's dedication was to St. Mary.²⁶ The king's college itself was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin, but is sometimes referred to only as the college of the Virgin.²⁷ The Treasurer's accounts—the best source for James III and IV's visits to and expenditure on churches—refer twice to Triduana at Restalrig, but seven times to Our Lady, including two references to “Our Lady's work.”²⁸ This would seem to suggest that the

²⁵ MacDonald, “Legend of St Triduana”; and idem, “Chapel of Restalrig,” pp. 34–41, esp. nn. 21–24. MacDonald does not mention the Medana/Brigid problem (see below).

²⁶ RMS 2:1329.

²⁷ Midl. Chrs p. 273 (1487); the Virgin is mentioned by herself in RMS 3:493 (Midl. Chrs, p. 290), and RSS 3:2238 (5 April 1547).

²⁸ References to ‘Our Lady's work’: TA 1:296 (14 Sept. 1496) and possibly 3:283 (8 Oct. 1506, which is, however, Triduana's feast). References to ‘Our Lady of Restalrig’: TA 1:382 (8 March 1497), TA 3:77 (15 July 1506). It may be noteworthy that James IV made offerings to Our Lady's light at Restalrig on several Marian feasts in 1511–1512: TA 4:178 (offering on the feast of the Presentation; offerings also made at Leith and Newhaven churches); TA 4:180 (offering on the feast of the Conception of

building of the chapel was associated at least as closely with the Virgin as with Triduana. However, as MacDonald has pointed out, there must have been a very good reason for building this elegant chapel in such an inelegant position, and that it was the site of relics would seem to be the most persuasive reason known to us.²⁹

An argument from silence is far from secure, particularly in the thin documentary atmosphere of medieval Scotland, and Restalrig is by no means a well-documented parish. It is also worth noting that, at exactly the same time as Triduana's cult was becoming more prominent, the Leith area was developing a markedly Marian climate. St. Mary's church in Leith was built in the early 1480s, while Newhaven, the nearby site of the eponymous new harbour, gained a church dedicated to St. Mary in 1507.³⁰ Restalrig, being St. Mary's church and having a royally-sponsored Lady altar, can thus also be seen in the context of this constellation of dedications to the *stella maris*. Our understanding of devotional focus at Restalrig is therefore perhaps blurred by the coincidence of these two developments, as by two broadcasters using the same frequency. Nonetheless, some doubts about the antiquity of Restalrig's Triduana connection seem worth entertaining, particularly in light of further analysis of the Triduana cult and legend.

If we look beyond Restalrig, we find other difficulties within Triduana's *Life*, and between her *Life* and her known cult. Although liturgical commemoration of Triduana is unknown before the mid-fifteenth century, and there are no earlier references to her presence at Restalrig, there are several earlier manifestations of one or more Triduanas, and possibly of the cult of the same saint.

It is worth noting at the onset that the narrative in the *lectiones* might be related to two other saints' *vitae*. Its most (literally) eye-catching feature is similar to episodes in lives of St. Brigid of Ireland, and is almost identical to an episode in the life of St. Medana of Galloway. All three women used similar tactics of eye-sacrifice to evade unwanted suitors. Different early lives of Brigid report slightly different versions of the event, and they involve her brothers, who are trying to marry

the Blessed Virgin, in Restalrig only); TA 4:189 (offering on the feast of the Visitation, in Restalrig and possibly Holyrood). Most of the references to offerings at Restalrig in TA (see indexes under 'Restalrig') mention no dedication.

²⁹ MacDonald, "Chapel of Restalrig," pp. 32–37, esp. 36–37.

³⁰ RMS 2.1972 (1490) is the first reference to the "new church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Leith." "Our Lady Chapell of the New Havin" is mentioned in 1507, TA 3:88; see also RSS 1:1404, 4033.

her off, rather than the suitor himself. Only the pre-tenth-century Irish *Bethu Brigitte* (followed by a later Middle Irish version) has Brigid herself plucking out an eye; in other versions the impairment is a miraculous dispensation. The Aberdeen Breviary lessons for Brigid's feast present the episode in this latter form. Brigid's lives also report the appearance of a miraculous spring which healed her.³¹

Medana's life, like Triduana's, is known only in the Aberdeen Breviary. It is very similar to Triduana's, and the eye-plucking episode is almost identical. However, it is closer to Brigid's in two important respects. Firstly, Medana is described as being of Irish origin (and pursued to Galloway by an Irish prince); and secondly, a miraculous spring heals her. Medana's life may also be connected to that of Saints Monenna and Modwenna, although the eye-plucking episode is shared by neither of these.³²

On the one hand, repeated motifs in saints' lives need not arouse instant suspicion that at least one has been fabricated.³³ On the other, the similar incidents in the lives of Triduana and the Irish saints suggest that Triduana is displaying a sanctity nourished in an Irish milieu, whether in fact, in literature or in both. However, nothing in her late medieval cult suggests such an Irish connection. For the moment, then, we can only bear these possible links in mind while examining Triduana's cult and its relationship to her legend.

Various strands of evidence have been identified by other scholars as manifestations of a cult of Triduana. These are (1) the St. Andrews

³¹ Mari Tanaka, "Eye for Eye: The Refusal of Marriage Episode in the Early Lives of St. Brigit" (unpublished paper presented at the 18th Irish Conference of Medievalists, Kilkenny, 2004). I am very grateful to Dr. Tanaka for sending me a copy of her paper. Brigid, like Triduana, produces a dry one-liner: "Here is that beautiful eye for you... I deem it unlikely that anyone will ask you for a blind girl." See *Bethu Brigitte*, trans. anon. (Dublin, 1978), chap. 15, available via University College Cork Corpus of Electronic Texts (CELT) <<http://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html>>; and *Life of St. Brigit (Leabhar Breac)* in *Three Middle Irish Homilies on the Lives of SS Patrick, Brigit and Columba*, trans. Whitley Stokes (Calcutta, 1877), p. 65, available via CELT <<http://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201010/index.html>>; *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Hyemalis, Proprium Sanctorum, fols. 45v-46r.

³² *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Estiva, Proprium Sanctorum, fols. 158v-159r. For information on Medana's life, I thank Fiona Edmonds (Oxford University), whose doctoral thesis on Irish-English connections, focusing on the Lancashire to Galloway region, is forthcoming. I am grateful to Claire Stancliffe for drawing my attention to both Tanaka's and Edmonds's work.

³³ For example, the very similar consumptive deaths of St. Therese of Lisieux and Blessed Gabriella Sagheddu look much like hagiographical topoi, but are perfectly historical. See G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London, 1909), chap. 4.

origin legend; (2) the legend of St. Boniface/Curadán of Rosemarkie; (3) a female saint named Trollhaena in the *Orkneyinga Saga*; (4) place-names in Caithness, Sutherland, Aberdeenshire and Banffshire; and 5) dedications in Orkney and Forfarshire.

Triduana's first *lectio* in the Aberdeen Breviary identifies her as a companion of St. Rule who brought St. Andrew's relics to Scotland. This notionally places her in the fourth century, in the time of Emperor Constantius. The ultimate source for this is St. Rule's history as told in the foundation legend of the church of St. Andrews. Triduana appears in the longer or B version, which in the form we have it has been dated to the second quarter of the twelfth century.³⁴ In this version, Rule is given a very long list of companions, including Triduana, Potencia and Emeria. Nothing more is said of their careers while they lived, but in the fullest copies of this version, these three virgins are said to be buried in the church of St. Anagles the Deacon in St. Andrews. This is clearly incompatible with the burial at Restalrig described for St. Rule's Triduana in the Aberdeen Breviary. St. Rule's companion was certainly not, then, identified with Triduana of Restalrig in the early twelfth century. The narrative of Triduana's life as represented in the *lectiones* thus cannot be the result of a wholly continuous tradition; it is not all of a piece.

It is also worth noting that this detail about burial does not find its way into the version of the foundation legend that was probably the most widely disseminated in the fifteenth century. This version is found in the chronicle of John of Fordun and his continuator, Walter Bower. It incorporates much of the foundation legend, including the list of Rule's companions, but omits the phrase about the virgins' burial.³⁵ Neither is Triduana mentioned in the Aberdeen Breviary *lectiones* for St. Rule himself.³⁶ This Triduana's burial in St. Andrews was therefore probably not well known even to those fifteenth-century readers particularly interested in history, and so the conflict with the Restalrig tradition would be less evident. So although there is no direct

³⁴ I am grateful to Dauvit Broun and Simon Taylor for providing me with part of their forthcoming edition of the legend. One text of the B version can be found in *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. W.F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1867), pp. 183–93.

³⁵ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 9 vols., ed. D.E.R. Watt, et al. (Aberdeen, 1987–1999), 1:310–317, 402–405, esp. 315, 404 (Book 2, chaps. 58–60 and notes). Fordun-Bower was the major Latin chronicle tradition of late medieval Scotland.

³⁶ *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Hyemalis, Proprium Sanctorum, fols. 82r–83r.

evidence, it is probable that the identification between Rule's Triduana and Restalrig's Triduana was made relatively late.

To complicate matters still further, a Triduana appears as another saint's companion, that of St. Boniface or Curadán of Rosemarkie, whose shadowy career and cult have been examined by Aidan MacDonald.³⁷ According to the Aberdeen Breviary, this Boniface was an Israelite who became pope after Gregory the Great.³⁸ Boniface felt called to take the Gospel to the extreme ends of the earth, and so headed for Scotland, taking with him six more bishops and seven representatives of each of the other degrees of holy orders. The clergymen were accompanied by a multitude of laypeople, and two virgin abbesses: *Crescencia et Triduana*. The party reached Pictavia and founded the monastery at Restenneth (near Forfar). The lessons in the Breviary then narrate how Boniface converted King Nechtan, and illustrate Boniface's dramatic holiness; nothing more is said about the abbesses.³⁹ Triduana is also linked with this Boniface in two manuscripts of Andrew of Wyntoun's *Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* was composed in the 1420s, but the late fifteenth-century 'Second Edinburgh' and 'Auchinleck' manuscripts both contain an interpolation adding more detail to Wyntoun's outline of Boniface's career. This interpolation mentions the "legion" of holy persons who accompanied Boniface, including "Sanct Madeane and Sanct Triduane." Again, no further details of Triduane's career are given, but the implication is that the whole group of saints is buried at Restenneth: a Latin inscription is quoted which claims that five thousand saints are entombed there.⁴⁰ Clearly, Triduana of Restalrig was not identified with Boniface's companion in the liturgical tradition from which the Aberdeen Breviary took the *lectiones*, or, if the office was newly compiled for the Breviary, she was not thus identified by its compilers. Rule's legend and that of Boniface/Curadán are very similar in their depictions of a saint's arrival in Scotland with a host of companions of different types. Whatever the relationship between these *legenda*, however, Boniface/Curadán's *lectiones* demonstrate that there

³⁷ Aidan MacDonald, *Curadán, Boniface and the Early Church of Rosemarkie* (Rosemarkie, 1992).

³⁸ This presumably identifies him with Boniface III (607), although Gregory's immediate successor was Sabinian (604–6).

³⁹ *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Hyemalis, Proprium Sanctorum, fols. 69v–70v (16 March).

⁴⁰ MacDonald, "Chapel of Restalrig," p. 34, n. 21; Andrew of Wyntoun, *Orignyal Chronicle*, 6 vols., ed. F.J. Amours (Edinburgh, 1903–14), 4:122–23, 1:51.

were (at least) two figures named Triduana in the Scottish hagiographical tradition, neither of whom could at her first appearance in these texts have been identified as someone buried at Restalrig. It is therefore hardly surprising if the various fragments relating to Triduana cannot be reconciled. The most radical implications of the Boniface material will be discussed below.

Triduana of Restalrig has also been identified with the holy virgin, Trollhaena, who features in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. In a nasty incident of around 1201, Earl Harald Maddadson had Bishop John of Caithness mutilated: his eyes were pierced and his tongue was cut out. The *Saga*, however, records that John prayed to Trollhaena while this was happening, and that afterwards he went to her resting place and was healed. Editors of the *Saga* have identified Trollhaena with Triduana, primarily due to the successful healing of eyes attributed to both of them, and owing to the appearance of ‘Tredwell’ on Papa Westray in Orkney (see below).⁴¹ However, this tempting identification is extremely uncertain, and the extent to which the two saints can be identified is rather limited. A wholesale identification of Trollhaena with the saint of Restalrig seems untenable. As MacDonald noted, while it is not actually impossible that Bishop John was taken to Restalrig, it is highly unlikely; and the narrative does not give the impression that visiting Trollhaena’s major shrine required a long journey outwith northern Scotland or Orkney. Moreover, while Scottish chronicles also record the assault on the bishop, they do not record the miracle or mention the saint. Rather, they say that the bishop was let off more lightly than the earl intended, retaining the sight of one eye and partial use of his tongue.⁴² There was therefore no contemporary or continuous Scottish

⁴¹ *The Orkneyinga Saga*, trans. A.B. Taylor (Edinburgh, 1938), chap. 111 and notes. On dating, see pages 91–94. On the background of the incident, see Barbara E. Crawford, “Peter’s Pence in Scotland,” in *The Scottish Tradition: Essays in Honour of Ronald Gordon Cant*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 18–20.

⁴² Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 4:426–27 (Book 8, chap. 62): “...sed secus evenit, quia usus lingue et alterius oculorum in aliquo sibi remansit” and note on p. 596. The *Liber Pluscardensis* entirely omits the episode of the bishop’s recovery (*Liber Pluscardensis*, 2 vols., ed. F.J.H. Skene [Edinburgh, 1877], 1:42). The so-called *Gesta Annalia* is the ultimate source; see Dauvit Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun,” in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland: Essays Presented to Donald Watt on the Occasion of the Completion of the Publication of Bower’s Scotichronicon*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Edinburgh, 1999), esp. pp. 15–17 (for the date). The current form of *Gesta Annalia* dates to 1385×7, although Broun suggests its origins may be pre-1285. Curiously, however, the early sixteenth-century compilation, *Extracta e variis cronicis Scocie*, accounts it a miracle, although it is still retention rather

identification between Trollhaena of Caithness and Triduana of Restalrig. The name 'Trollhaena' is also unlikely to be identifiable with either 'Tredwell' or 'Triduana'.⁴³ The superficial resemblance between these ladies of ocular interest may, therefore, be entirely illusory. It is possible that it was the same woman who had given rise to the cults in both thirteenth-century Caithness and fifteenth-century Lothian; however, no real continuity between the cults is visible, and the mere possibility of their common origin is in itself inconclusive.

The place-name evidence is the most uncertain. W.J. Watson identified four place-names in northeast Scotland which he analyses as references to Tredwell; and it is clear from a number of sixteenth-century references that 'Tredwell' was the Scots name by which St. Triduana of Restalrig was known.⁴⁴ These places are (with their earliest known references) Croit Trolla in Caithness (1909, when the name was reported as obsolete); Kintradwell near Brora in Sutherland (1566 in the form, *Clyntredwane*; 1654 in the form, *Kintradwell*); Cairntradlin near Kinellar, Aberdeenshire (1478 in the form, *Carnetralzeane*); and Cartrilzour in Banffshire (1573).⁴⁵ The relevance of 'Croit Trolla' to the Triduana cult depends on the identification of Trollhaena and Triduana, which as we have already seen is somewhat problematic. The Sutherland

than restoration of sight which is remarked upon: "...sed ex miraculo usus lingue et visus alterius oculorum secum remansit" (*Extracta e variis chronicis Scocie*, ed. W.B.D.D. Turnbull [Edinburgh, 1842], p. 83).

⁴³ Simon Taylor, personal communication. Although I have not looked for Trollhaena in the Norse context, no one apparently identifiable with Trollhaena appears (on 8 October or elsewhere) in the Nidaros Breviary (1519), the closest Norwegian equivalent to the Aberdeen Breviary (facsimile edition: *Breviaria ad usum ritumque sacrosanctem Nidarosiensis ecclesie*, ed. Hans Buvarp and Baltzar M. Borsum [Oslo, 1964]).

⁴⁴ For example, 'Sanct Tredwellis Ile' (as in n. 7, above).

⁴⁵ W.J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), pp. 334–35. The earliest such names on record are the *Carnetralzeanes*, found in RMS in 1478, as Watson notes (RMS 2:1396, 3: 625, 633). For Kintradwell in Sutherland, Watson takes the form *Clyntredwane* from *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*; *Kintradwell* can be seen on Robert Gordon's and Johan Blaeu's maps of Sutherland (1636×52 and 1654, respectively; accessible via the National Library of Scotland's Digital Library: <<http://www.nls.uk/digitallibrary/map/early/record.cfm?id=2>> and <<http://www.nls.uk/digitallibrary/map/early/record.cfm?id=120>>). Watson does not give references for the other names. They are also mentioned, with references, in James Murray Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: Non-Scriptural* (Edinburgh, 1914), pp. 476–79. Croit Trolla in Caithness is given as the name of land next to a ruined chapel in D. Beaton, *Ecclesiastical History of Caithness and Annal of Caithness Parishes* (Wick, 1909), p. 63. The form *Cill Trolla* for Kintradwell is given in John Nicol, "Pictish Tower at Kintradwell, Parish of Loth," *Old-lore Miscellany of Orkney, Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland* 3 (1910), p. 230; it is unclear whether this is a recorded form or a supposed derivation.

‘Kintradwell’ is more clearly an instance of ‘Tridwell’; Watson states that this also derives from Croit Trolla, but admits, “How Triduana came to be Tröllhaena in Norse is not clear to me,” and apparently bases the identification on the miracle of Bishop John’s eyes. As we have seen, however, this is also problematic. This Sunderland place-name at any rate appears to be evidence of a Tredwell cult in the far north, further represented in two Tredwell dedications in Orkney (discussed below), whichever figure was—or was thought to be—represented by that name.

The Aberdeenshire and Banffshire names are more troublesome still. Watson reads them to mean “Triduana’s cairn.” MacDonald takes these names to suggest very early veneration of the eremetical lady of the central part of the *lectiones*, placing the legend in a Pictish context and noting that the names are within what was Pictland.⁴⁶ However, Watson does not explain why ‘Triduana’ or ‘Tredwell’ is to be identified with the element represented by *tralezane*, *trailzeane*, *trilzeare*, and *tradezeane*, and Simon Taylor more recently has not found any good reason to affirm it.⁴⁷ The idea of an early cult of St. Tredwell in this area of the northeast should probably therefore be disregarded.

In his argument for the presence of an earlier cult, Watson also notes the chapel and loch of St. Tredwell on Papa Westray, Orkney, the earliest known reference to which is a description of ‘superstitious’ popular veneration in 1701; and the fair of ‘St. Trodline’ at Rescobie in Forfarshire—a place featured in St. Triduana’s *lectiones*—described in 1845 as an ancient tradition.⁴⁸ Both of these look far more promising as evidence than the place-names just noted, although the absence of known medieval references to these dedications makes their significance difficult to assess. The appearance of ‘St. Trodline’ at Rescobie might indicate a continuous early cult of a local saint; but then an active cult at Rescobie might equally be a sixteenth-century development. This dilemma is common to the study of other cults of native saints which become more visible in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such

⁴⁶ MacDonald, “Legend of St Triduana,” pp. 28–29.

⁴⁷ Simon Taylor, personal communication.

⁴⁸ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, pp. 334–35. There is a description of St. Tredwell’s Chapel and of popular veneration there in 1701. See John Brand, *A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland-Firth & Caithness* (1701, reprint, Edinburgh, 1883), pp. 87–89. *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 11: *Forfar-Kincardine* ([Edinburgh, 1845], 610 [Forfar]) for Rescobie describes the former fair of St. Trodline as an ancient, near-forgotten tradition.

as Palladius and Ternan. Whether such late medieval activity represents wholesale novelty, more modest revival or mere augmentation is impossible to determine.

The Orkney dedication to St. Tredwell is similarly interesting but, given the complete absence of evidence for its date, problematic. It is noteworthy that on Papa Westray there is also a chapel of St. Boniface. If this is a dedication to St. Boniface-Curadán of Rosemarkie, it is entirely possible that ‘St. Tredwell’ in this place was the Triduana who appears as a companion of St. Boniface in some texts, as discussed above. If this is the case, Papa Westray’s St. Tredwell could not be perfectly identified with St. Triduana of Restalrig, the companion of St. Rule. The dedication—if it is early enough, which we cannot know—may, however, add further weight to the possibility of conflicting traditions about the origin of the eye-extracting Tredwell-Triduana, only one of which could be included in the readings for her office. It is true that Boniface’s Triduana hovers more closely to the central narrative in the lessons than does St. Rule’s companion, and Boniface’s cenobitic activity near Forfar is not too far from Triduana’s eremitical activity in the same region. However, while it may be correct to see some similarities between Boniface’s Triduana and the Triduana of the Aberdeen Breviary, the identification was not strong enough to force late medieval writers and readers to make it themselves. The latter Triduana is instead found within the almost parallel St. Rule legend.

There are indeed similarities between the Rule and Boniface legends which have been pointed out by Aidan MacDonald.⁴⁹ Both are credited with missionary work and the spreading of an apostle’s cult: St. Andrew in Rule’s case, and St. Peter—without the advantage of relics—in Boniface’s. Despite the parallels, St. Rule’s career, being associated with the central site of the Scottish Church, seems to have been better known and to have retained a more stable literary form in the later Middle Ages, which may be why, in cases of doubt, someone called ‘Triduana’ was assigned to this tradition.

What is to be done with this collection of evidence fragments? Perhaps its most justifiable interpretation is that there was a cult of a northeastern female saint who at some point was identified as a companion of St. Rule and as the saint whose relics were at Restalrig. It is also possible that there was a competing identification of this saint as a

⁴⁹ MacDonald, *Curadán*, pp. 18–21, 27–30.

companion of St. Boniface-Curadán, which may have been represented in Orkney. Any more precise conclusion is precluded by not only the thinness of the available evidence, but also the impossibility of dating several of the strands of evidence and the interactions between them. In assigning any interpretive framework to the scattered Triduana and Tredwell references, one has the sense of reconstructing a skeleton with a small number of poorly-preserved bones with little distinctive character.

Among the many questions which invite further investigation, the one of most relevance to the visible late medieval cult is why Restalrig ends up as the site of St. Triduana's veneration: as already discussed, it is a location where activity is found rather late and fits poorly with what else is known of the cult. Aidan MacDonald makes the ingenious suggestion that James III's mother, Mary of Gueldres (d.1463), brought Triduana's cult to royal attention, on the basis that Mary was endowed with land in the area where Triduana reportedly lived.⁵⁰ There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Mary planned the college, founded as it was some years after her death; neither is she commemorated in any of its surviving documents. Mary's great ecclesiastical projects were an Observant Franciscan house and Trinity College, both next to Edinburgh, neither of which reveal any indication of a special interest in Scottish saints. This link, therefore, while not impossible, cannot be substantiated and does not seem to cohere with Mary's documented interests.

Based on the limited evidence, I suggest that the occasion which would best explain the sudden appearance of Triduana's cult at Restalrig would be an *inventio* of relics which then required a constructed history. Even more speculatively, perhaps the miracles noted in the Aberdeen Breviary lessons might actually have been the occasion of an invention, or at least an identification, of relics at Restalrig. The Englishwoman described in the narrative was granted a dream giving clear instructions about going to a saint's tomb in a precise location (and it is clear from the text that Triduana identified herself by name in the dream).⁵¹ This visitor and her miracle could have suggested a very suitable identity

⁵⁰ MacDonald, "Chapel of Restalrig," pp. 40–41.

⁵¹ "[T]andem apparuit ei in somnis triduana uirgo dicens vade in scociam ad locum qui lestalryk dicitur et ad sepulcrum meum a quo sospitata redditura es" (*Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Estiva, Proprium Sanctorum, fol. 123r). The account is so brief, though, that one hesitates to assert this interpretation too strongly.

for relics found at the site: the healing of her blindness could easily be linked with a saint known for her eyes. This, however, is mere speculation, and is indeed weakened by the fact that the breviary does not explicitly present the miracle as an invention story; after all, this is just the sort of narrative that the compilers might have been expected to include in the *lectiones* had it been available to them.⁵²

Whatever the origins of Triduana's cult, it is undeniable—and of particular relevance to the discussion of sanctity in late medieval Scotland—that it took off at the end of the fifteenth century and in the first half of the sixteenth. Triduana's relics became sought after. Sir James Braid, chaplain of the altar of St. Fergus in St. Andrew's parish church between 1479 and 1515, "laboured at the hand of James IV" to obtain a bone of Triduana for his altar. He also had a picture of her painted in Flanders.⁵³ Gavin Dunbar, bishop of Aberdeen 1518–1532, gave some of her relics in a heavy silver reliquary to his cathedral church.⁵⁴ Triduana was also the dedicatee of several altars or chaplainries: in Brechin cathedral by 1505,⁵⁵ in Perth parish church by 1518,⁵⁶ in St. Giles', Edinburgh, in 1527,⁵⁷ and in Dundee parish church at some unknown point before the Reformation.⁵⁸ Sir David Lindsay of the Mount shows that she had become a familiar saint in his poem, *The Monarche* (c. 1554), in which he mocks popular reliance

⁵² See for example the lesson on St. Ebba's feast narrating the invention of her relics at Coldingham in the Aberdeen Breviary: *Breviarium Aberdonense*, Pars Estiva, Proprium Sanctorum, fol. 87v (*lectio iv*).

⁵³ F.C. Eccles, "The Altar of St Fergus in Holy Trinity, St. Andrews: A Sixteenth-Century MS. Rental and Inventory," *Scottish Historical Review* 2 (1905), p. 266; 3 (1906), p. 110, for dating correction; and W.E.K. Rankin, *The Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, St Andrews: Pre-Reformation*, St. Andrews University Publications 52 (Edinburgh, 1955), pp. 79–80.

⁵⁴ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, 2 vols., ed. Cosmo Innes (Aberdeen, 1845), 2:185.

⁵⁵ TA 3:66, expenditure on alms, 8 October (Triduana's feast) 1505, in Brechin, 9s for the king's offering on St. Triduana's 'board'.

⁵⁶ A.G. Reid, "Notice of a Box, Supposed to be the 'offerand stok' of St Eloi's Altar in St. John's Church, Perth," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 20 (1886), pp. 50–53; the Perth Hammermen's Book refers in 1518 to 20d "ressavit furth of Triduanis stok."

⁵⁷ *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesiae Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh: A Series of Charters and Original Documents Connected with the Church of St. Giles Edinburgh, M.CCC.XLIV–M.D.LXVII*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1859), no. 130.

⁵⁸ Alexander Maxwell, *Old Dundee, Ecclesiastical, Burghal, and Social, Prior to the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1891), p. 36 (date unknown). The earliest dated reference to St. Triduana's chaplainry in Dundee seems to be post-Reformation (1583): Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Scrymgeour of Wedderburn Writs, GD137/3921.

on saints with specialised fields of interest. He lists those who run to St. Tredwell “to mend thare eine” alongside those who invoke St. Bride to cure the cows, St. Sebastian to ward off arrows, and St. Kentigern to cure the mad. At another point, in criticism of the veneration of images, Lindsay gives a list of saints and their attributes as they are seen in churches; this again includes Tredwell, “quhilk on ane prik heth boyth hir eine,” alongside well-known saints both universal and Scottish.⁵⁹ Over the two or three generations before the Reformation, then, Triduana became a mainstream saint with a recognisable healing speciality and pictorial iconography.

What was her appeal? The publicity offered by royal patronage and a grand newly-built chapel surely helped to raise her profile. On a pragmatic level, the availability of relics with something of a track-record of miracles was also likely to draw interest. Moreover, the efficacy of Triduana’s intercession—if Sir David Lindsay’s poem is indeed representative—was known to be reliable in the particular case of eye-trouble. Once this distinctive association was made, the cult was, one might say, a trusted brand with a definite client-base.

More specifically, Triduana can be located in two contexts which help to make sense of her appeal in this particular time and place. One is her standing as a peculiarly Scottish saint, as a companion of St. Rule. If technically from Greece, St. Rule and company were treated as native saints in Scotland for all intents and purposes. Devotion to Triduana appears quite concretely in the context of interest in native saints. The two clerics known to have acquired pieces of her relics for her churches also both acquired relics of other historical Scottish saints. The chaplain James Braid himself copied a *Legendary* for his altar, which presumably included material for the various Scottish saints whose relics he had pursued. The more precise nature of the wide interest in native saints in this period is hard to ascertain. David McRoberts showed that veneration of native saints was a significantly growing phenomenon of fifteenth-century Scotland; the Aberdeen *Breviary* was a result rather than a cause of this, although it probably offered a wider repertoire of native saints than previously known on a national level. This development was connected to a sentiment which is

⁵⁹ Sir David Lindsay, *Works*, 4 vols., ed. D. Hamer (Edinburgh, 1931–1936), vol. 1, *The Monarchie*, ‘Off Imageis Vsit amang Cristin Men,’ lines 2279–2708, at lines 2291–2292, 2366.

sometimes difficult to avoid labelling ‘nationalism’: the project to develop a Scottish liturgical Use, for example, was at least partly predicated on strong anti-Englishness.⁶⁰ Yet in certain circles this trend also had an antiquarian element. It is worth remembering that Bishop Elphinstone, who compiled the Aberdeen Breviary, was also the founder of Aberdeen University, a home of Scottish humanists. Triduana’s connection to the arrival of St. Andrew’s relics, the kingdom’s patron, may have made her of particular interest to scholars and readers with an antiquarian interest in the national past. She was tied into the dense network of conversion-era saints whose interconnections formed in the late medieval chronicles a firm basis for Scotland’s Christian national history.⁶¹

Secondly, Triduana may be considered as a companion to the immensely popular virgin martyr saints. Triduana was obviously not a martyr; indeed, the Bollandists are thoroughly disapproving of her self-inflicted injuries, which they regard as a less than admirable example.⁶² However, her story does not centre on chastity cruelly assaulted, and heroically and gorily preserved.⁶³ This was a common theme of the legends of virgin martyrs such as Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara and Margaret. The cults of these martyrs were at their height in England in the fifteenth and particularly the early sixteenth centuries, and are similarly very well-represented in Scotland during this period, although the same richness of evidence does not survive.⁶⁴ These saints’ lives include similar elements of Christian virgins being threatened as a result of both their faith and chastity, and being martyred after undergoing torments. They often appeared grouped together in pictorial and literary representations.

The nature of these cults’ popularity has been the subject of some debate. Eamon Duffy argues that the appeal of such women was owing in part to the colourful drama of their stories, but also—and more importantly—the immense intercessory efficacy offered by the

⁶⁰ David McRoberts, “The Scottish Church and Nationalism in the Fifteenth Century,” *Innes Review* 19 (1968), 3–14.

⁶¹ Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone*, pp. 232–41, chap. 7. See for example, Roger Mason, “Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Past,” in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, ed. Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh, 2002), pp. 112–17.

⁶² *Acta Sanctorum... Octobris, editio novissima*, 14 vols. (Paris, 1855–1882), 8:281.

⁶³ MacDonald, “Legend of St Triduana,” p. 28: “The legend exhibits the four classic ingredients of the typical short story: sex, violence, religion and the royal family.”

⁶⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 170–77; Fitch, “Power through Purity,” esp. pp. 16–18.

combination of virginity and martyrdom, which brought them so close to God. Catherine, Margaret and Barbara were indeed among the group of Auxiliary Saints whose intercession had been (according to their *vitae*) guaranteed by explicit divine promises to be effective in obtaining the favours sought by petitioners.⁶⁵ It should be noted that the cult of an individual virgin martyr may display considerably more nuance than this association with a group suggests, as demonstrated in Katherine Lewis's careful study of the cult of Catherine of Alexandria in England.⁶⁶ Yet despite the problems which Lewis raises for the well-worn readings of the virgin martyrs' cult, the prominence of the common elements of their lives remains undeniable; as a result, it is still worth pointing out that together they at least offered a familiar form of sanctity. Triduana was not quite so egregious in either suffering or promised efficacy. Nonetheless, her story was nearly as vivid and her iconography generally similar, in that she was depicted with the instrument of her dramatic suffering. Inasmuch as she resembled these more famous virgins, Triduana was an eminently recognisable type of saint. To assimilate her into parish or personal life required no stretch of the late medieval devotional imagination. Although Triduana was not as popular as the Roman virgin martyrs, it may be suggested that the popular appeal that she did have arose from similar grounds and had a ready audience.

That Triduana's sanctity was appreciated by late medieval Scots from the king downwards is possibly the single most certain fact about her. Excavation of her cult's several-stranded history raises more questions than it can answer. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Triduana's cult is a case example of sanctity as perceived in late medieval Scotland; a perception that is particularly comprehensible in its specific context.

Triduana is of interest as a lesser-known native saint. Locating a single Triduana or Tredwell in time or space is not possible at present, and the connections between the various *loci*—both documentary and geographical—in which a Tredwell or Triduana appears, are the dimmest part of the cult's history. Triduana of Restalrig was certainly, however, a *national* saint in the late fifteenth century sense: not in the

⁶⁵ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 170–77; Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, entry for 'Fourteen Holy Helpers'.

⁶⁶ Katherine Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2000), chap. 2, esp. pp. 85–88, 96–110 and chap. 3.

strong sense of a national patron, but rather in the weaker sense of a saint indubitably part of Scottish history. What remains is the question of whether she was known to be native to any locality other than the Scotland written into shape by the historians and antiquarians of the late Middle Ages. Without detailed evidence of local interests it remains impossible to say. However, it is unlikely: a cult centred on Lothian when all indications of earlier manifestations point only outwith Lothian would seem to be separated from its roots. But even if Triduana can be claimed as one of the relatively few Lothian saints, locality as such does not seem to be a tremendously significant aspect of her cult. If I am correct in arguing that she was identified at Restalrig only in the fifteenth century, her cult was indeed not native to Scotland south of Forth. Yet if this is the case, the royal favour shown to her and the relative success of her cult emphasizes all the more the powerful appeal of sanctity itself: sanctity as proved in miracles, as demonstrated in her legend, and as promised by the presence of relics. Ultimately, these matters were doubtless more pertinent to more individuals in late medieval Scotland than whether or how the legend of St. Triduana came to be formulated. Alasdair MacDonald concluded his discussion of the historical Triduana with the remark that “if she is unknown to God, she is at least known to the Bollandists, and that will have to do for us.”⁶⁷ I am not sure that either we or the Bollandists could claim any certain knowledge of Triduana’s life on earth. What commended Triduana to the Bollandists, however—despite their disapproval of the details of her life—was simply her sanctity, as also perceived by medieval Scots. And to perceive this sanctity was precisely to acknowledge that Triduana was known to God, if to no one else: *Qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur; non enim qui seipsum commendat ille probatus est: sed quem Deus commendat.*

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⁶⁷ MacDonald, “Legend of St. Triduana,” p. 31.

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THE ARCHITECTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CULTS OF SAINTS: SOME SCOTTISH EXAMPLES

Richard Fawcett*

Introduction

The saints were of supreme significance for the patrons of medieval ecclesiastical architecture.¹ Those churches that were not consecrated to an aspect of the godhead were under the invocation of one or more saints, whose intercessory power, it was hoped, could be called upon when needed. Beyond that, there was the expectation that altars, which were the chief locations of worship within the churches, would have saints' relics sealed within them. Indeed, since at least the time of the Fifth Council of Carthage in 401 it had been urged—albeit with varying degrees of consistency—that altars without relics should be destroyed.² This chapter aims to look beyond such generalised associations, however, in order to offer a brief overview of some Scottish churches which had more specific relationships with saints. It will consider the ways in which the design of those buildings may have been conditioned by a wish to give architectural emphasis to the saints' cults, as well as the means by which structured access to the main foci of the cults was organized.³

The buildings to be discussed range from votive chapels established in gratitude for the intervention of a saint in the affairs of an individual, as at Ladykirk and St. Monans, to churches erected to mark sites particularly associated with a saint, as at Culross, Egilsay, Restalrig and Tain. In at least some of those cases, the requirements of the cult might be expected to have been a factor in the overall design of the building. At

* I owe thanks to Sue Fawcett and to my colleagues, Allan Rutherford and Peter Yeoman, for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper; I must, however, accept responsibility for all remaining errors.

¹ The importance of saints' images in late medieval devotional practice has been helpfully discussed in John Higgitt, "*Imageis Maid with Mennis Hand*": *Saints, Images, Belief and Identity in Later Medieval Scotland*, Ninth Whithorn Lecture (Whithorn, 2003).

² John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300–1200* (Oxford, 2000), p. 67.

³ The most extensive discussion of pilgrimage in Scotland and its impact on church architecture is in Peter Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London, 1999).

most of the buildings to be considered, however, the accommodation of a shrine was just one of a wider gamut of functions associated with a monastic, cathedral, collegiate or parochial establishment. In considering Dunfermline Abbey, Edinburgh St. Giles, Glasgow Cathedral, Iona Abbey, Kirkwall Cathedral, Melrose Abbey, Paisley Abbey and St. Andrews Cathedral, therefore, an attempt will be made to understand the arrangements made to accommodate the shrines against the background of a more complex range of requirements.

The Churches

Assessment of the architectural evidence will start with a brief examination of two votive churches established in thanksgiving for what was believed to have been supernatural aid afforded to their founders: St. Monans in Fife and Ladykirk in Berwickshire (figs. 1d, 1e, 2). St. Monans was built by David II in 1362–70, reportedly in gratitude to St. Monan for saving him from a near-fatal arrow wound, though it may be more likely that it was because he had survived a risk of drowning off the coast of the small settlement dedicated to St. Monan.⁴ Ladykirk was built by James IV in 1500–1507, supposedly in thanks to the Virgin Mary for his rescue from drowning in the Tweed.⁵ Both of these churches were designed as stone vaulted, aisleless cruciform structures in the most accomplished Scottish late Gothic architectural idiom of their times. St. Monans was set out with a spacious rectangular choir, a central spired tower flanked by transepts and a nave. Ladykirk was given architectural emphasis by means of a triplet of polygonal apses to the chancel and transeptal chapels, and a small western tower.

It is no longer clear, however, if anything in the design of these buildings was generated specifically by the needs of the saints' cults. Although allowance must be made for the fact that neither was ever completely finished,⁶ this suggests there was no expectation that the

⁴ *Register of the Great Seal*, 11 vols., ed. John Maitland Thomson et al. (Edinburgh, 1882–1914), vol. 1, no 304; Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 9 vols., ed. D.E.R. Watt, et al. (Aberdeen, 1987–98), 7:261, 464.

⁵ *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, 13 vols., ed. Thomas Dickson and J. Balfour Paul (Edinburgh, 1877–1916), 3:3, 82, 83, 87, 88, 294–99; *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 23 vols., ed. J. Stuart, et al. (Edinburgh, 1878–1908), 11:276.

⁶ At St. Monans, despite being reestablished and adapted for a small community of Dominican friars on the orders of James III in 1471 (*Register of the Great Seal*, vol. 2, no.

saints' cults would be the predominant feature of the worship in either church.⁷ Indeed, at neither church is it even known with certainty if there was a shrine associated with the saint, and we may suspect that in each case the patron's chief motive was therefore to express thanks by providing a more worthy place of worship for the local community.⁸ In essence, it would seem that gratitude was being demonstrated by the performance of meritorious works rather than through making any elaborate provision for the saint.

In a small number of other cases, however, the commemoration of a saint or the need to house a shrine with appropriate dignity was evidently of more significance in the design of the new building, with the concomitant implication that pastoral functions were perhaps relegated to a level of lesser importance. This seems to have been the case with the now roofless church on the Orkney island of Egilsay,⁹ which is thought to have been built between 1116 and 1136 to mark the site of the martyrdom of Earl Magnus Erlendsson by his rival for the earldom, Haakon.¹⁰ It was laid out with a rectangular chancel, a larger rectangular nave and a western tower (figs. 1c, 3). This was a relatively conventional arrangement for churches of parochial scale in many parts of Europe, except that in this case the tower was of circular rather than the more usual square plan, although that in itself is unlikely to have had any significance for the cult.¹¹ The most unusual internal feature of Egilsay

1047), there is no evidence that the nave was ever built; at Ladykirk the west tower was only completed in the eighteenth century, possibly to the designs of William Adam.

⁷ At both churches, the clergy were responsible for the cure of souls either initially or at a later stage. Ladykirk was the church of the parish of Easter Upsettlington; St. Monans, which was initially in the parish of Kilconquhar, became a separate parish on the foundation of the Dominican friary within the church in 1471 (Ian B. Cowan, *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* [Edinburgh, 1967], pp. 178, 204).

⁸ It is unlikely that there could have been a Marian shrine at Ladykirk. Because it is thought that there was an existing cult of Monan at St. Monans before David II built his new church, however, it cannot be ruled out that there was a shrine there. What little is known about St. Monan is summarised in Alexander Boyle "Notes on Scottish Saints," *Innes Review* 32 (1981), p. 66.

⁹ That is not to say that Egilsay did not serve parochial functions, either from the start or at a later stage. It was certainly parochial by around 1429, when it was united with Rousay (Cowan, *Parishes*, p. 60).

¹⁰ Eric Fernie, "The Church of St Magnus, Egilsay," in *St Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 140–61. Soon after his murder, Magnus's body was translated to Birsay, but was then translated a second time to the newly founded cathedral in Kirkwall (*The Orkneyinga Saga*, ed. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards [Harmondsworth, 1981], pp. 95, 96, 104–105).

¹¹ The Northern Isles were particularly inventive in the form of their church towers,

was the provision of an upper chamber above the low barrel-vaulted chancel, which possibly served as a treasury for items associated with the martyrdom; access to this appears to have been by a timber stair and gallery, of which faint traces survive on the south side.

At Tain, in Ross, particularly expansive architectural provisions were made for the local saint, Duthac, as there were three church buildings associated with his name. One by the shore marked his supposed birthplace, and there were two in the burgh churchyard, one of which served as the parish church, while the other may have had no parochial role.¹² Of these three, the building that was eventually given greatest prominence was what was probably the non-parochial chapel in the churchyard, which likely housed the saint's principal shrine and relics. It is a spacious rectangular structure of four bays marked by buttresses (fig. 1a), and the analogies of the architectural details with those in the choir aisles at Elgin Cathedral and the south nave chapel at Fortrose Cathedral suggest a construction date at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹³ It was presumably within this chapel that the body of priests who had long served the shrine was eventually formally incorporated as a college in 1487.

Tain was unusual—though certainly not unique, as will be seen when considering St. Kentigern—in having more than one church that served different aspects of the saint's cult. In most cases where provision was made for housing a shrine and for affording access to it by pilgrims, this had to be achieved within a church that had other liturgical functions, such as those of a monastery, a cathedral, a college or a parish. In those cases, the planning had to accommodate a considerable range of needs, some of which must have been of greater daily importance than those of the shrine. The most widely held image of pilgrimage churches in a western European context is that of the great monastic or episcopal basilicas that were systematically planned to provide orderly routes around the main foci of a cult, while not impinging on the areas

as evidenced by a D-shaped tower at Stenness and a pair of circular towers at Deerness; in both cases, although the towers are lost they are known from drawings made before their destruction. A sketch of Stenness was included on a map of the 1760s by William Aberdeen, reproduced in J. Storer Clouston, *Early Norse Castles* (Kirkwall, 1931), p. 38. Drawings of Deerness were published in G. Low, *A Tour through the Islands of Orkney and Schetland in 1774* (Kirkwall, 1879), p. 54.

¹² John Durkan, "The Sanctuary and College of Tain," *Innes Review* 13 (1962), 147–56.

¹³ Richard Fawcett, *Elgin Cathedral* (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 55–56.

set aside for the *opus dei*. This is preeminently demonstrated at the final goal of the pilgrimage route of St. James (Santiago) at Compostela,¹⁴ and at the French royal abbey of Saint-Denis, for example.¹⁵ None of the Scottish shrine churches showed anything like the complexities of planning to be seen at either of these buildings, although that is more likely to be a reflection of the prohibitive cost of constructing such churches than of any indication of the dearest wishes of the patrons of Scottish pilgrimage churches. Indeed, despite the limitations imposed by less favourable economic conditions, it can be seen at a number of Scottish churches that considerable care was given to planning effective ways of routing pilgrims around the church, and of encouraging devotion at the shrines and satellite foci, whilst at the same time limiting the risk of disruption of the daily round to worship in the presbytery and choir.

One solution was to build an architecturally distinct shrine chapel against a part of the main body of the church. The most extraordinary example of that approach was a two-storeyed hexagonal chapel adjoining the parish church at Restalrig, near Edinburgh, which was built over the accepted burial place of St. Triduana (figs. 1f, 4).¹⁶ The chapel was built under the patronage of James III, who made substantial contributions to the building campaign between the 1470s and 1490s, and it was eventually accorded the status of a Chapel Royal.¹⁷ Only the lower storey survives, which was specifically dedicated to Triduana and which is covered by a complex vault carried on a central pier. Based on the extant evidence, it was clearly a building of high architectural quality, and fragments found through excavation suggest there were unfulfilled

¹⁴ Although the pilgrimage church as a type had been long recognised (as in Arthur Kingsley Porter, *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads*, 10 vols. [Boston, 1923]), Kenneth John Conant in *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800 to 1200* ([Harmondsworth, 1959], pp. 91–103) was among the first to explore the architectural and cultic significance of the type.

¹⁵ Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis, for example, tells how great throngs of pilgrims meant that “on feast days, completely filled, [the abbey church] disgorged through all its doors the excess of the crowds as they moved in opposite directions, and the outward pressure of the foremost ones not only prevented those attempting to enter from entering but also expelled those who had already entered” (trans. Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey-Church of St-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 2d ed. [Princeton, 1979], pp. 88–89).

¹⁶ On St. Triduana and her cult, see Helen Brown’s chapter in this volume.

¹⁷ Iain MacIvor, “The King’s Chapel at Restalrig and St Triduana’s Aisle: A Hexagonal Two-Storeyed Chapel of the Fifteenth Century,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 96 (1962–1963), 247–63.

complementary plans to greatly increase the scale of the church itself. On the British Isles as a whole, centralised plans of the type seen at this chapel are most commonly associated with chapter houses. This was a type that originated in England in the first half of the twelfth century,¹⁸ but of which there are thirteenth-century Scottish examples at Inchcolm Abbey and Elgin Cathedral, with excavated fragments of another at Holyrood Abbey, not far from Restalrig. However, the Restalrig structure was clearly not a chapter house, and in any case, a hexagonal plan for a chapter house would be highly unusual.¹⁹

The Restalrig chapel was formerly thought to have been a well house,²⁰ providing waters for those with eye afflictions who were seeking the thaumaturgical aid of St. Triduana. She was regarded as having a particular interest in such matters, because she had plucked out her own eyes and sent them to King Nechtan after he had the temerity to admire them.²¹ The well house interpretation is now generally rejected, though perhaps it should not be altogether discarded, and here a number of points should be considered. First, the floor of the lower storey is considerably below the level of the water table, and there is a problem of water ingress now solved only through constant pumping. Is it possible the water was originally fed into a cistern, perhaps in a recess in the north wall that now has no obvious function? Second, the superstructure of a well that has come to be known as St. Margaret's Well, now relocated in Holyrood Park but which used to be close to the church, was presumably also linked in some way with the cult. Like the chapel, it is of hexagonal plan, and the closely comparable pattern of its vaulting to that over the lower storey of the chapel strongly suggests that the well and the aisle were functionally linked (fig. 5). Third, and significantly, hexagonal plans are often—although certainly not always—associated in some way with water.²²

¹⁸ For discussion of English chapter house design, see W.A. Wickham, "Some Notes on Chapter-Houses," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 64 (1912), 143–248.

¹⁹ A rare example of a hexagonal chapter house is found at St. Margaret's Priory Church in King's Lynn.

²⁰ Thomas Ross, "St Triduana's Well-House," *Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society* 3 (1910–1911), 238–46.

²¹ *Breviarium Aberdonense*, ed. William Blew (London, 1854), Pars Estiva, fol. cxxii.

²² At least one Scottish font, at Inverkeithing, is also of hexagonal form, perhaps because six was the number in mystical numerology associated with creation or perfection. However, the most common shape for fonts was the octagon, with its numerological associations with resurrection and rebirth.

All of these factors suggest that the association of water with Tri-duana's cult should not be so readily dismissed. Nevertheless, whatever conclusions are drawn about the lower storey of the Restalrig chapel, which was in essence a crypt or undercroft, the upper storey was always the more important part of the building, and within it James III endowed an altar as early as 1477. Alasdair MacDonald has suggested that the main storey could have been conceived as a sacramental shrine to house the consecrated host as an object of adoration, with the chapel itself being in essence a greatly enlarged pyx for the host.²³ In support of this theory, he has pointed out that its overall form may have resembled the hexagonal pyx for the reserved host shown on the altar before which James IV is worshipping in the Book of Hours made for him at the time of his marriage to Margaret Tudor in 1503.²⁴ The precise vocabulary of micro-architectural decoration of that pyx, with its array of buttresses and traceried windows, reflects the Netherlandish origins of the artist, though the component elements are essentially similar to what once existed at the Restalrig chapel. There can, of course, be no certainty about this idea, though it is an attractive one, and it would have been no novelty for a chapel to be conceived of as an enlarged shrine.²⁵ An association with the sacrament might also help to explain why there was such extraordinary haste on the part of the General Assembly on 21 December 1560 in ordering that the "kirk of Restalrig as a monument of idolatrie, be raysit and utterlie castin downe and destroyed."²⁶

A more straightforward approach to placing a shrine chapel against a church may be seen at Paisley Abbey, where the chapel of the possibly seventh-century abbey church of St. Mirin extends off the end of the south transept and is accessible through an arcade of two arches

²³ A.A. Macdonald, "The Chapel of Restalrig, Royal Folly or Venerable Shrine?" in *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen, A.A. MacDonald and S.L. Mapstone (Leuven, 2000), pp. 27–59.

²⁴ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 1897 (Hours of James IV and Margaret Tudor); reproduced in Yeoman, *Pilgrimage*, colour plate 12.

²⁵ One of the most ambitious expressions of the idea that a building might be conceived as a greatly enlarged shrine is St. Louis's Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, which was designed to house on the grandest scale the recently acquired relics of the crown of thorns and other instruments of Christ's Passion.

²⁶ *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland*, 3 vols., ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh, 1839–1845), 1:5.

(figs. 1g, 6).²⁷ The architectural detailing of those arches and of the primary feature within the chapel leaves little doubt that the shell of this chapel was an integral part of the mid-thirteenth-century building campaign at the abbey church, of which the outer wall of the south nave aisle and the west front are the other most complete survivors. Much of what is now most visible within the chapel, however, including an added eastern bay,²⁸ the great east window and the ribbed barrel vault, belongs to a late medieval remodelling that is probably dateable to around the time that a chaplainry of St. Mirin was established in about 1499, when funds were given by James Crawford of Kilwynet.²⁹ The association of this chapel with St. Mirin is confirmed by the survival of part of a carved stone reredos depicting scenes from the life of the saint that is positioned along the east wall behind the site of the altar.³⁰ This particularly precious survival of the iconoclasm to which the abbey was subjected in the course of the Reformation is attributable to the fact that the chapel was walled off to create a chapel and burial vault for a branch of the Hamilton family.

As at Paisley, there are a number of other cases of the late medieval remodelling of a saint's chapel, and it may be suspected that these operations were occasionally linked with attempts to encourage renewed enthusiasm for cults that were attracting less fervour. Devotion to saints and offerings at their shrines tended to be cyclical, depending on how effective those saints were perceived to be in intervening in the affairs of mortals.³¹ Nevertheless, since many of the saints involved in these revived campaigns were of Scottish or Irish origins, this might also be

²⁷ Richard Fawcett, "Paisley Abbey Church: The Medieval Architecture," in *The Monastery and Abbey of Paisley*, ed. John Malden (Glasgow, 2000), 37–50.

²⁸ The evidence that the eastern bay is an addition to the chapel is to be seen in the survival of what had clearly been an external base course along the inner face of the wall of the north side of that bay, and in the form of the base to the wall shaft on the corresponding section on the south side, which is of a later type than that further west.

²⁹ *Charters and Documents Relating to the Burgh of Paisley*, ed. W.M. Metcalf (Paisley, 1902), pp. 52–55.

³⁰ James S. Richardson, "Fragments of Altar Retables of Late Medieval Date in Scotland," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 62 (1927–1928), 200–205; John Malden, "The Shrine of St Mirin and the 'Tomb' of Marjorie Bruce," in Malden, *Monastery and Abbey of Paisley*, 69–88.

³¹ Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* (London, 1975), p. 150. There is a useful analysis of the patterns of income of the English cathedral shrines in Ben Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 144–242, which casts an illuminating light on the susceptibility of cults to the shifting loyalties of pilgrims.

seen as a reflection of the new spirit of religious nationalism that David McRoberts has suggested was entering the Scottish Church during the later Middle Ages, and that is generally regarded as having found its fullest expression in the composition of the Aberdeen Breviary for specifically Scottish use.³²

The form and location of the saint's chapel at Paisley has no known precise parallels. However, another example of a chapel that had a documented association with important relics, and that was similarly set alongside part of a church, is the Preston Aisle at the Church of St. Giles in Edinburgh (figs. 1h, 7). This chapel, which was built at the expense of the burgh, was set against the south flank of the choir, where the adjacent aisle was the Lady Chapel. It commemorated the munificence of Sir William Preston of Gorton, who had donated a relic supposedly taken from one of the arm bones of the patron saint. The bond for building the aisle was entered into in 1454/5 and, although the work was scheduled to be completed within seven years,³³ heraldry on one of the vault bosses which relates to Lord Hailes, provost of the burgh in 1487, suggests its completion was long delayed. The bond specified that the aisle was to contain a fine commemorative brass for Sir William, and that his nearest heirs were to have the right to carry the relic whenever it was taken in procession. Nevertheless, to what extent the aisle was itself intended to serve as a cult centre for the church's patron saint is difficult to say. Architecturally, it is essentially one particularly large example among the growing numbers of chapels that were being added around the existing core of the parish church. An interesting feature of these chapels is that, although they appear from the plan to have been added in an altogether random way (fig. 1h), the architectural vocabulary of the arcade piers opening into them continued to follow a form established in the first decade of the fifteenth century in the Albany Aisle, positioned off the two western bays of the north nave aisle. It is true that the Preston Aisle was given added emphasis through fine tierceron vaulting, which at that time was

³² David McRoberts, "The Scottish Church and Nationalism in the Fifteenth Century," *Innes Review* 19 (1968), 3–14. More recently, David Ditchburn has suggested that what has been seen as a rise of nationalism in late medieval Scotland would be more correctly characterised as anti-English sentiment. See David Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe: The Medieval Kingdom and its Contacts with Christendom, 1214–1560* (East Linton, 2000), pp. 56–57.

³³ J. Cameron Lees, *St Giles' Edinburgh, Church, College and Cathedral* (Edinburgh, 1889), pp. 33–34; 320–21.

probably only found elsewhere at St. Giles's over the chancel. But there is nothing in the design of the chapel that suggests it was necessarily regarded as a shrine chapel, and it may have been perceived more as an imposing chantry chapel for a great benefactor. In this connection it is worth noting that the recorded dedication of the main altar in the chapel was to St. Thomas the Martyr rather than St. Giles.³⁴

If the relic of St. Giles was not normally held in the Preston Aisle, it was presumably placed in a safe location in the vicinity of the high altar. But it seems that shrines need not always be located within the churches with which they were associated. This was evidently the case at Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders, where Waltheof, the second abbot (d. 1159), came to be widely regarded as a saint even though he was never formally canonised. As was usual for abbots, he was buried in the chapter house and, although his grave was reopened or disturbed on at least three occasions, it was never moved from there (fig. 8b).³⁵ Nevertheless, as he came to be regarded as imbued with great sanctity, it is likely that his tomb was enlarged and given greater enrichment. Fragments of what must have been a fine tomb were found in the chapter house excavations in 1921, and it is thought these formed part of a tomb-shrine for Waltheof that had been constructed by around 1240, when the chapter house itself was rebuilt. In that year, the *Melrose Chronicle* records that the abbots' bones in the chapter house had been entombed more appropriately, except for those of Waltheof, whose tomb was also reopened at that time but left in peace apart from the removal of some small bones.³⁶ The quatrefoiled openings in the sections of the chest that were found suggest the main part of the tomb was of the *foramina* type, similar, for example, to the tomb chest at Salisbury Cathedral thought to have been provided for St. Osmund.³⁷ Such openings allowed pilgrims closer physical access to the burial, as is shown in the frequently reproduced depictions of the shrine of Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey, in which a pilgrim is depicted as forcing himself through an aperture.³⁸ The associated discovery at Melrose

³⁴ George Hay, "The Late Medieval Development of the High Kirk of St Giles, Edinburgh," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 107 (1975–1976), p. 257.

³⁵ Richard Fawcett and Richard Oram, *Melrose Abbey* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 184; 186–88.

³⁶ *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1835), p. 151.

³⁷ Sarah Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd: The Decoration of Salisbury Cathedral* (London, 1999), pp. 113–15.

³⁸ Cambridge University Library Ee. 3.59, fol. 30r (Life of St. Edward the Confessor);

of a number of shaft fragments suggests that the tomb shrine was given additional prominence by a ciborium-like canopy. The apparent location of this tomb shrine within the entrance to the chapter house raises the issue of the extent of public access permitted to a Cistercian chapter house, since it suggests that favoured layfolk would have been allowed to visit the tomb-shrine.³⁹ In this connection, it is worth noting that as early as 1215 one of the abbey's great benefactors, Philip de Valognes, was buried in the chapter house despite the fact that entombment in this chamber is usually thought of as the prerogative of the abbots.⁴⁰ Valognes's apparent motive was to be close to the saint in death.

The location of a shrine in a chapter house was relatively exceptional, and we must therefore now consider some of the other ways in which shrines might be housed within churches. Two of the cases discussed so far have involved additions to churches, but in other cases, adaptations may have been made to accommodate relic chapels within existing parts of the building. At St. Andrews Cathedral, which was a major magnet for pilgrims owing to its possession of the relics of its patron saint, there is thought to have been a relic chapel at the far east end (figs. 8a, 9). In fact, it is most likely that the two aisleless eastern bays of the church, begun in 1160, functioned initially as the presbytery for the high altar. This was certainly the case at the slightly smaller church of Arbroath Abbey, the planning and overall design of which were closely influenced by those of St. Andrews. Indeed, at Arbroath the lower masonry of the altar survives close to the east wall, an arrangement that had the advantage of allowing light to flood the presbytery area from windows in three walls.⁴¹ Despite this, David McRoberts was probably correct in seeing this easternmost area at St. Andrews as a relics chamber,⁴² although it may have functioned in this way only after a major fire in

reproduced in *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London, 1987), p. 205, fig. 125.

³⁹ There was a precedent for retaining Waltheof's tomb in the chapter house at Melrose's mother house of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, where the shrine of St. William was also within the entrance area of the chapter house (Peter Fergusson and Stuart Harrison, *Rievaulx Abbey* [New Haven, 1999], pp. 166–67).

⁴⁰ *Chronica de Mailros*, p. 121.

⁴¹ Richard Fawcett, "Arbroath Abbey: A Note on its Architecture and Early Conservation History," in *The Declaration of Arbroath: History, Significance, Setting*, ed. Geoffrey Barrow (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 50–85.

⁴² David McRoberts, "The Glorious House of St Andrews," in *The Medieval Church of St Andrews*, ed. David McRoberts (Glasgow, 1976), pp. 67–68.

1378 which necessitated extensive repairs and liturgical reordering.⁴³ It was presumably this area that was referred to as the ‘revestiarium’ by the author of *Scotichronicon*, which Prior James Haldenston (1417–43) is reported to have “adorned with the relics, refurbishing and enclosing them [in reliquaries], not without great expense,” after raising the floor level.⁴⁴ But to what extent there was ever lay access to this area is difficult to assess, since there is no evidence of the formation of an ambulatory route that would have permitted entry without passing through the presbytery itself. The area may have been regarded essentially as a form of secure treasury, from which the relics were brought out on appropriate occasions, an arrangement that may be partly comparable—albeit on a larger scale—with the elevated treasury above the chancel at Egilsay. Certainly in its final state, any access from the aisles appears to have been blocked by the tomb of Bishop Henry Wardlaw (1403–1440) on the north side.⁴⁵

If it is not clear how generally accessible the *revestiarium* at St. Andrews would have been, by contrast, at another church in that diocese we have some evidence for a carefully planned sequence of aisles that permitted a route around the church with access to a feretory chapel behind the high altar that did not require pilgrims to pass directly through either the choir or the presbytery. That church was Dunfermline Abbey, where the body of the recently canonised St. Margaret was moved to her newly built chapel in 1250 (figs. 10a, 11).⁴⁶ It must be stressed that any interpretation of the architectural arrangements at Dunfermline is based on very incomplete evidence, because only fragments of the lower south and east walls of the feretory chapel survive, together with the sub-base of the shrine itself.⁴⁷ However, the plan of the adjoining

⁴³ It is attractive to speculate that the relic chamber might have grown out of the use of this area as a place where relic lockers had earlier been placed. The presbytery was a common location for such lockers, and it has been suggested, for example, that the most likely use for the mural aumbries in the east presbytery wall of Melrose Abbey was for reliquaries (Fawcett and Oram, *Melrose Abbey*, p. 165).

⁴⁴ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 3:437. The use of the term, *revestiarium*, presumably indicates that the area also served as a vestry or sacristy.

⁴⁵ Bower, in *Scotichronicon* (3:411) reports that Wardlaw “was buried in the wall between the choir and the Lady Chapel”; the latter was at the east end of the north choir aisle. The burial chamber of this tomb remains in place, and fragments of the tomb have been reconstructed in the site museum.

⁴⁶ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 5:297–99.

⁴⁷ For discussion of the shrine at Dunfermline, see Richard Fawcett, “Dunfermline Abbey Church”; and Peter Yeoman, “Saint Margaret’s Shrine at Dunfermline Abbey”; both in *Royal Dunfermline*, ed. Richard Fawcett (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 49–50 and pp. 79–88, respectively.

eastern parts of the church is at least partly understood from records of what was found when the new parish church was built on the site of the monastic choir in 1818–1821. The new chapel was an aisleless rectangular structure that probably rose no higher than the choir aisles. The surviving bases around the inner face of the walls indicate that there was decorative wall arcading around its lower walls, while the bays were articulated by wall shafts that presumably had stone vaulting springing from them. The chapel was probably reached by a straight ambulatory path behind the high altar, interconnecting the aisle ends, and it is likely that the ambulatory was within the high main vessel of the church rather than within the chapel itself. From what we can understand of the earlier church at Dunfermline, construction of this chapel and the approaches to it must have involved removing the apsidal east end of the church that was started around 1128 and extending the presbytery a short way eastwards to a new gable wall. The feretory chapel projected beyond that new presbytery gable.

The site of the shrine is marked by a stepped sub-base of polishable fossiliferous stone believed to have been part of a fourteenth-century refurbishment of the chapel.⁴⁸ The shrine would probably have been elevated on an open arcaded base rising from this sub-base, perhaps protected by a removable timber cover.⁴⁹ We know from records of the cult of St. Margaret that there were also other foci of the pilgrimage itinerary around the church apart from the shrine itself.⁵⁰ These included the site of the first tomb in the nave, an altar dedicated to St. Margaret towards the east end of the south nave aisle and a holy well further west in the south aisle. At appropriate times, there would have been processions around all of these stations.

About the time that Dunfermline was being remodelled, work was also in progress on the rebuilding of the eastern limb of Glasgow Cathedral on a larger scale for Bishop William Bondington (1233–58), where the appeal for funds was in progress by 1242.⁵¹ Bondington

⁴⁸ New stones were bought in 1368 (*Exchequer Rolls*, 2:300).

⁴⁹ Such covers were a normal protection for a precious shrine. Some idea of their form can be drawn from the description of the oak cover of the shrine of St. Cuthbert at Durham Cathedral, which could be raised by ropes to which silver bells were attached in order to attract attention when the cover was lifted. See *Rites of Durham, Being a Description... of all the Ancient Monuments, Rites and Customs... [of] the Monastical Church of Durham*, ed. Joseph T. Fowler (Durham, 1903), p. 4.

⁵⁰ For the documentation and a discussion of the cult of St. Margaret, see *Miracles of St Aebba and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2003).

⁵¹ *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis*, ed. Cosmo Innes (Edinburgh, 1843), p. xxviii.

probably had several aims in this campaign. One of these must surely have been the creation of a large enough eastern limb to house both the presbytery and canons' choir within a single clearly defined part of the building, thus avoiding the need for an extension of the choir down into the eastern part of the nave and resulting loss of spatial coherence (figs. 10b, 10d, 12, 13, 15). But Bondington was probably also determined to improve the architectural framework for the cult of St. Kentigern.⁵² The prime initial focus of pilgrimage was the accepted burial place of the saint, who had died in 612, which had already been given a prominent place within the unfinished crypt of a remodelled eastern limb begun by Bishop Jocelin around 1181.⁵³ Bondington, however, evidently required something more architecturally magnificent, probably with multiple foci for the cult. A thirteenth-century chapter seal may depict two of those foci: what appears to be a great *chasse*, and a secondary head shrine.⁵⁴ But in enlarging his cathedral, the fall of the ground beyond the tomb site created a significant structural problem for Bondington. Unless he was prepared to demolish the shell of the recently started nave and extend the choir westwards over part of its site, the only way to increase the length of the building was to build out eastwards across the slope, which would require a greatly elongated crypt. This was the course he adopted. Yet there was a further problem in extending the church eastwards, because within this plan, the tomb site itself—necessarily a fixed point—was left well towards the western end of the main space of the new crypt in a way that might have made appropriate architectural emphasis difficult.

As it happened, however, these potential disadvantages were turned to great advantage by a master mason who was able to exploit magnificently the difficult topography of the site. In the process, he created one of the most spatially sophisticated crypts of thirteenth-century Europe.

⁵² For a discussion of the evidence for the life of St. Kentigern, see Alan MacQuarrie, *The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History, AD 450–1093* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 117–44. For the medieval hagiography, see *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern: Compiled in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Alexander Penrose Forbes, *The Historians of Scotland* 5 (Edinburgh, 1874).

⁵³ For a brief account of the possible stages of the development of the cathedral, see Richard Fawcett, "Current Thinking on Glasgow Cathedral," in *The Archaeology of Cathedrals*, ed. Tim Tatton-Brown and Julian Munby (Oxford, 1996), pp. 57–72.

⁵⁴ E.L.G. Stones: "Notes on Glasgow, the 'Tomb' in the Lower Church," and idem, "The Evidence from the Chapter Seal of Glasgow," both in *Innes Review* 18 (1967), pp. 88–92 and pp. 92–95, respectively.

As part of an outstandingly creative response to the problem of how to give emphasis to the tomb, the eastern part of the main space of the crypt was treated as a distinct chapel, entered through an arcade of three arches and with a slightly domed vault, which was dedicated for use as the cathedral's principal Lady Chapel. This effectively left the tomb at the centre of the remaining space, and around it the piers and the vaulting they supported were organized in an altogether masterly way to create a fluently modelled sequence of spaces which left no doubt that the tomb, below a canopy of vaulting that concentrated attention upon it, was the main focus (fig. 12).⁵⁵

Glasgow was not the only major shrine church in Scotland to have a crypt. There was one under the eastern part of the choir at Whithorn Cathedral (fig. 10c), which may have housed St. Ninian's tomb.⁵⁶ It is not certain when this crypt was first constructed, although it may have reached its fullest extent during one of a series of fifteenth-century building campaigns.⁵⁷ Its original quadripartite vaults were at some stage replaced by more utilitarian barrel vaults, which have detracted from its spatial impact, but, even allowing for that change, there is nothing to suggest that it ever approached the subtle articulation of space found in Glasgow's crypt. The abbey church of Iona also had a crypt below the thirteenth-century choir, which appears to have been covered—most unusually—by a timber floor rather than by vaulting. Since there must have been only limited headroom within it, however, it cannot have had any significant liturgical function, and its principal function was probably no more than to raise the choir and presbytery to a suitable level on a site that sloped down towards the east. The

⁵⁵ For discussion of the crypt vaulting, see Christopher Wilson, "The Stellar Vaults of Glasgow Cathedral's Inner Crypt and Villard de Honnecourt's Chapter-House Plan: A Conundrum Revisited," in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of Glasgow*, ed. Richard Fawcett, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 23 (Leeds, 1998), pp. 55–76.

⁵⁶ Yeoman, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 33–44.

⁵⁷ In 1408, for example, the Premonstratensian community had to contribute half its income for ten years to the work (Rome, Vatican Library, *Registra Avinionensia* 330, fols. 431–431v), while in 1424, the fourth earl of Douglas endowed a chapel (*Register of the Great Seal*, vol. 2, no. 12). In an inscription at Melrose Abbey, apparently dating from the early fifteenth century, the French mason John Morow indicated he had worked at 'Galway'. In 1431, it was reported that Prior McGilliachnisky began work on a Lady Chapel (*Scottish Supplications to Rome, 1428–1432*, ed. Annie I. Dunlop and Ian B. Cowan [Edinburgh, 1970], pp. 175–76).

crypt was suppressed when the choir was rebuilt on a more expansive scale in the fifteenth century (fig. 10e).⁵⁸

Returning to Glasgow Cathedral: the design of the central part of the crypt was unique, but the overall plan of the substructure was governed by the plan intended for the main level of the new eastern limb (figs 10b, 12, 13, 15). This was to have an aisle down each side of the main space, an eastern ambulatory at right angles to the aisle ends, and a straight row of four chapels on the east side of the ambulatory. Although there were precedents for square-ended plan types in England,⁵⁹ this particular variant had been developed most enthusiastically by the Cistercian order, first in eastern France, as at Morimond in about 1155–70; and then in England, as at Byland Abbey in Yorkshire around the 1170s; and at Abbey Dore in Shropshire in the later decades of the twelfth century.⁶⁰ In those cases, the plan was chosen largely because it was an effective way of providing greater numbers of chapels within a relatively simple plan form that was compatible with the Cistercian order's requirement for architectural austerity. If the evidence from excavations carried out in 1893–94 is to be trusted, the plan had probably also been adopted at the Scottish Cistercian abbey of Newbattle by the later twelfth century.⁶¹ At Glasgow, it is possible that the great attraction of the plan was that it allowed for ready access to a feretory associated with the high altar.

In this it would be comparable with the arrangement at Dunfermline. There, however, the feretory chapel projected to the east of the ambulatory, whereas at Glasgow it is more likely to have been placed west of the ambulatory, in an enclosure immediately behind the high altar (fig. 13) and directly above the Lady Chapel. References to offerings made by Edward I in 1301 give us one of the best clues to the main foci associated with the cult at Glasgow. We are told that on three days, Edward made offerings at the high altar and at the feretory, and on the fourth day he offered gifts at the high altar and at the tomb in the vault.⁶² As

⁵⁸ *Argyll, an Inventory of the Monuments*, Vol. 4, *Iona* (Edinburgh: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, 1982), 58–85.

⁵⁹ M.F. Hearn, "The Rectangular Ambulatory in English Medieval Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 30 (1971), 187–208.

⁶⁰ Peter Fergusson, *The Architecture of Solitude: Cistercian Abbeys in Twelfth-Century England* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 73–79; 97–100.

⁶¹ Christopher Wilson, "Newbattle Abbey," in Colin McWilliam, *Buildings of Scotland: Lothian* (Harmondsworth, 1978), pp. 345–47.

⁶² Stones, "Notes on Glasgow," pp. 88–95.

noted above, the chapter seal may give some idea of what both the great *châsse* and a head shrine looked like. But we may be additionally fortunate at Glasgow in having what may have been part of the shrine base itself: an arcaded plinth that would have raised the shrine to an appropriate height.⁶³ If the interpretation of this fragment is correct, this would supplement the evidence surviving at Dunfermline, where there is the stepped sub-base of the shrine (fig. 11). Taken together, these two pieces of evidence provide invaluable indicators of the ways in which shrines might be raised to a considerable height to make them visible throughout much of the church. However, it has been pointed out that there is no firm evidence that Kentigern's body was in fact translated to the main body of the church in the thirteenth century. Indeed, in 1420 Bishop Lauder was seeking papal consent to do just this, perhaps in the final stages of a programme of works necessitated by lightning damage reported in correspondence of 1406.⁶⁴ This suggests that, if we are understanding Bishop Bondington's intentions for the architectural setting of the shrine correctly, his death in 1258 may have prevented their being carried through to fruition.

The eastward extension of major churches as seen at both Dunfermline and Glasgow, which resulted in those churches having eastern limbs of about the same length as their naves (figs 10a, 10b), became increasingly common in the thirteenth century. In one and possibly both of these cases, in addition to providing a more or less distinct limb of the building to accommodate the principal liturgical needs of the clergy, the creation of a suitable space for a shrine chapel must surely have been an important motive, even if this was not necessarily accomplished immediately at either place. More suitable provision for the saint was perhaps also one factor in the mid-thirteenth-century decision to extend the eastern limb of the cathedral of the Northern Isles at Kirkwall, which held the relics of St. Magnus, whose martyrdom at Egilsay was discussed above (figs. 10f, 14). The decision to extend the cathedral eastwards at that time was remarkable. The nave was still far from complete, and so there must have been some compelling reason for diverting energy and resources back to the part of the building that had been deemed finished many years earlier. The first location for the

⁶³ George Hay, "Notes on Glasgow Cathedral: Some Architectural Fragments in the Lower Church," *Innes Review* 18 (1967), 95–98.

⁶⁴ A.A.M. Duncan, "St Kentigern at Glasgow Cathedral in the Twelfth Century," in Fawcett, *Medieval Art and Architecture*, p. 15.

shrine in the cathedral begun around 1137 had been the high altar, which was probably in or immediately west of the eastern apse that terminated the first choir.⁶⁵ Since this location was no longer available when the eastern limb was extended to the east by three wide bays, undoubtedly a new and more readily accessible feretory chapel would have formed part of this operation. However, in 1919 relics believed to be of St. Magnus (on the evidence of the wounds they displayed) were found in a recess in the easternmost pier on the south side of the original east end.⁶⁶ But it is unlikely that this would ever have been the preferred location for such important relics, and it is probable that they were only placed there as a short-term protective measure, most likely during the turmoil of the Reformation. It may therefore be assumed that in the thirteenth century, the shrine would have had to be relocated towards the east end of the newly extended eastern limb, either above or beyond the repositioned high altar, where it could be reached from the aisles that stretched the full length of the new work.

If we once again return to Glasgow Cathedral to consider other possible architectural evocations of the cult of Kentigern, one of the most important secondary foci may have been in the so-called Blackadder Aisle, a projection off the south transept of four bays from north to south and two from east to west (figs 10b, 10d, 15). The architectural details of the aisle leave little doubt that this most unusual projection was started in the mid-thirteenth century, as part of the same phase of work as the rebuilding of the choir, because many of the mouldings were cut from templates that had been used in the crypt and choir and are thus clearly the work of the same mason.⁶⁷ The aisle was originally designed as two-storey, rising perhaps as high as the choir and nave aisles, and with the surviving lower storey acting as a crypt

⁶⁵ For discussion of the planning of Kirkwall Cathedral, see Richard Fawcett, "Kirkwall Cathedral: An Architectural Analysis"; and Eric Cambridge, "The Architectural Context of the Romanesque Cathedral at Kirkwall"; both in Crawford, *St Magnus Cathedral*, pp. 88–110 and pp. 111–26, respectively. According to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, the reliquary had been placed "above the high altar of the church that stood there at that time" (*Orkneyinga Saga*, p. 105).

⁶⁶ John Mooney, "Discovery of Relics in St Magnus Cathedral," *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* 3 (1924–1925), pp. 73–78; and "Further Notes on Saints' Relics and Burials in St Magnus Cathedral," *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* 6 (1927–1928), pp. 33–37.

⁶⁷ Richard Fawcett, "The Blackadder Aisle at Glasgow Cathedral: A Reconsideration of the Architectural Evidence for its Date," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 115 (1985), pp. 277–87.

to the main level above. But, except for the lower parts of a window jamb on the west side, the upper storey appears never to have been built. As with the apparent failure to translate St. Kentigern's relics into the choir before the fifteenth century, this plan alteration points to changed priorities after the death of Bishop Bondington. On the evidence of the liberally displayed heraldry, the unfinished shell of the lower level was eventually covered over with tierceron vaulting for Archbishop Robert Blackadder (1483–1508) at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Perhaps, as with the remodelling of St. Mirin's Chapel at Paisley, Blackadder's completion of the lower storey was a late medieval attempt to give new lustre to a cult that had by then lost something of its earlier attractions.

There could be a small-scale parallel for the Blackadder Aisle in a projection off the east end of the choir at Whithorn Cathedral (fig. 10c), but the closest Scottish analogy was at Iona Abbey. There, a large, excavated transept-like projection also appears to have been started in the thirteenth century (fig. 10e), and, as at Glasgow, it was left unfinished.⁶⁸ At Iona, however, the space appears to have been organized as a main vessel with an eastern chapel aisle, rather than as two parallel aisles of equal scale. Partial parallels for such asymmetrical transept-like projections may also be found in some Irish mendicant churches,⁶⁹ and in the case of Iona, which shows a close awareness of Irish work,⁷⁰ such parallels could be more than purely formal. However, most of the Irish examples are believed later than the Iona transept and there is little to suggest that their design was specifically linked with the cults of saints; the principal motivation for their construction is assumed to have been the provision of congregational space for those who wished to hear the friars' preaching.⁷¹ At both Glasgow and Iona, by contrast, it is likely that these lateral projections were linked in some way with the cult of the local saint: Kentigern at Glasgow and Columba at Iona. At Glasgow there are tantalising indications that, at a later stage at least, the aisle covered the area where a holy man named Fergus was buried. It was Fergus's hearse, drawn by untamed oxen, that Kentigern supposedly

⁶⁸ *Argyll*, vol. 4 (*Iona*), pp. 84–85.

⁶⁹ Harold G. Leask, *Irish Churches, and Monastic Buildings*, 3 vols. (Dundalk, 1955–1960), 3:89–112.

⁷⁰ For discussion of the Irish parallels see *Argyll*, vol. 4 (*Iona*), pp. 21–25.

⁷¹ Leask, *Irish Churches*, 3:92–93.

followed from Fife to Glasgow,⁷² and on the webbing of Archbishop Blackadder's inserted vaulting, positioned over the entrance to the aisle, is a low-relief carving of a corpse on a hearse, with an unfortunately incomprehensible inscription that includes the name of Fergus.⁷³ Whatever it was that the aisle housed was important to the process by which pilgrims progressively experienced the story of Kentigern's mission, including his first journey to Glasgow, as they worked their way around the foci of his cult, culminating their peregrinations at the tomb site and shrine.

Beyond the various works he sponsored at Glasgow, Archbishop Blackadder also demonstrated an interest in revitalising the wider pilgrimage route associated with St. Kentigern. It may have been Blackadder who built the small chapel for the saint which survives in a fragmentary state on the shores of the Firth of Forth at Culross, since we know that he made a bequest to it in his will of 1508.⁷⁴ Culross is where Kentigern's pregnant mother is supposed to have drifted ashore after being exposed in a boat on the open waters (fig. 1b),⁷⁵ and in sanctifying this spot through construction of a chapel, we see something similar to the establishment of multiple pilgrimage stations at Tain. The plan of the Culross chapel, which was recovered by excavation in 1926, was of a small aisleless rectangle terminating in an eastern apse, with an altar base at the east end, and perhaps a screen wall between chancel and nave.

Conclusions

From the foregoing discussion, which is necessarily based on incomplete architectural and documentary evidence, it is clear that the patrons of Scottish shrine churches took a pragmatic approach to the planning of their buildings, and were prepared to adopt a considerable range of solutions. Although their plans may have been first developed for other types of churches, and were not specifically tailored to the functions of shrine churches, they lent themselves well to those functions; although this does mean that few shrine churches would have been

⁷² *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern*, pp. 50–52.

⁷³ The inscription appears to read, "this is the ile of car Fergus".

⁷⁴ John Durkan, "Archbishop Robert Blackadder's Will," *Innes Review* 23 (1972), 89–92.

⁷⁵ *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern*, pp. 38–40.

immediately identifiable as such from their external architectural forms. The willingness to rely on solutions initially developed for less specialised purposes is one of the reasons why no two surviving shrine churches demonstrate quite the same approach to either the siting of the shrines or the management of access to them. However, it must be stressed that in many cases, and especially where there is little or no clear documentary information, the architectural evidence for the ways in which the shrines were housed and accessed within the chosen architectural framework could be open to varying interpretations.

We can say with reasonable certainty at Dunfermline that the eastern projection functioned as a feretory chapel, on the basis of a combination of the documentary records associated with the cult and the survival of the shrine sub-base (figs. 10a, 11). But the plan would not in itself indicate that the chapel was designed to accommodate a shrine; indeed, in such a location and with such a plan, it was more likely to have been designed as a Lady Chapel. Similarly, the various extended eastern limbs at Glasgow, Kirkwall and Whithorn would have admirably facilitated the marshalling of groups of pilgrims around the enclosures of the choir and presbytery to the various sacred loci associated with the cult (figs 10b, 10d, 10f, 10c). Yet such planning had initially evolved to meet the daily requirements of communities of both secular canons, and monks and regular canons; while at Glasgow, as we have seen, it is not even certain that the shrine was elevated to the presbytery level before the later Middle Ages, if then.

The most obvious exception to the tendency to adapt well-tried solutions to the problems posed by saints' churches is to be found at the extraordinary chapel of Restalrig, where, as we have seen, there may have been complex iconographic and numerological allusions behind the design (figs. 1f, 4). Indeed, it is the very complexity of the Restalrig symbolism that now makes it so difficult for us to fully understand the coded messages that its patron and designers wished to convey, though we are left with plentiful grounds for speculation.

If the exteriors of most shrine churches gave only veiled clues as to their functions, once inside them we can be assured that the orchestration of liturgical fixtures and furnishings, together with the gathering crescendo of richly painted and gilded decoration, would have made clear for pilgrims where, and in what sequence, they should direct their attentions. Successive waves of iconoclasm have left only tantalisingly fragmentary evidence for the overall richness of appearance that must have prevailed at many shrine churches. Nevertheless, we do still have

precious fragments such as the St. Mirin reredos at Paisley, the shrine sub-base at Dunfermline, and the possible shrine base and carved depiction of St. Fergus at Glasgow, which help us to visualise a little of what pilgrims would have experienced.

Indicators of the range of things that would have attracted pilgrims are also to be found in a number of inventories of the moveable precious objects held by some shrine churches. An inventory of Glasgow Cathedral drawn up in 1432, for example, lists fragments of Christ's cross and of his manger; some hairs, milk and parts of the girdle of the Virgin; some bones, a comb, part of the hair shirt and oil from the tomb of St. Kentigern; some of the skin of St. Bartholomew; a bone of St. Ninian; bones of St. Blaise and St. Eugene, part of the tomb of St. Catherine; part of the cloak of St. Martin; a comb of St. Thomas Becket; and bones of St. Thenew.⁷⁶ In addition to these relics, also listed in the inventory are the fine vestments, sacred vessels, jewels and illuminated manuscripts that were provided to enrich the celebration of the services and that would have made a deep impression on those who came to worship. It is perhaps a little strange that primary relics of Glasgow Cathedral's patron saint do not figure more prominently in the inventory, especially given that the secondary relics itemised were a puzzlingly slight basis for such a major cult. But we should remember that such relics as existed were generally concealed from public gaze within the aumbries, shrines and reliquaries that housed them. We must assume that it was the total sensory experience of their visit to the shrine churches that was most highly valued by the pilgrims, with the architecture, furnishings and decoration providing the magnificent and spiritually uplifting context for that experience.

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⁷⁶ John Dowden, "The Inventory of Ornaments...Belonging to the Cathedral Church of Glasgow in 1432...." *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 33 (1898–1899), 280–329.

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SEEING SANCTITY

This section examines the problem of rendering sanctity visible by exploring relationships between holiness and the act of seeing. Medieval creators of devotional imagery, the images themselves and their contemporary reception are all considered in three studies that each demonstrate the importance of visual works of art in medieval Christian experience and in the attainment of spiritual benefits. In “Images of the Holy and the Unholy: Analogies for the Numinous in Later Medieval Art,” I examine artistic strategies that may have helped contemporary viewers to recall their experiences of the more profound nature of divinity, that which has been described by the early twentieth-century philosopher and theologian, Rudolf Otto, as the *numinous* element in religion. Otto’s concept of the numinous complements and expands ideas about the holy articulated by his medieval predecessors, including the fifth-century Pseudo-Dionysius, whose theological and mystical ideas heavily influenced Scholastic thought. Using Dionysius and Otto as reference points, I analyse a series of later medieval images, ranging from a portrait of God the Father to visions of Antichrist, in order to ascertain how medieval artists transcended the limits of iconography to facilitate viewer contemplation of the mysterious depths of both the divine and the damned.

Michael Bury elucidates a neglected yet fascinating genre of devotional imagery in “The Measure of the Virgin’s Foot.” In 1610 in Venice, a controversy arose as an official response to the sale of impressions of a printed outline of the Virgin’s foot, claimed to have been derived from a measurement of her shoe. The impression was accompanied by the notification of an indulgence, which was to be gained by kissing the image and by saying certain prayers. The category of abstracted image to which the ‘measure’ of the Virgin’s foot belongs also includes images of the ‘measure’ of Christ’s wound, known from popular medieval prayerbooks, that also claimed to be the precise measurement of an actual object. But both types of images are abstractions that neither reproduce, nor claim to reproduce, the concrete objects to which they refer. Because of this important difference in the relationship between the image and its prototype, pictorial ‘measures’ contrast sharply with better-known types of devotional imagery of a more naturalistic variety that were calculated to arouse devotion by means of direct emotional appeal. The author describes several examples of holy ‘measures’ and explains how such a starkly abstract type of image nevertheless possessed such great devotional appeal and apparent spiritual efficacy.

Inspired by Gary Dickson's work on the flagellants in Italy, Mitchell B. Merback examines this notorious lay revivalist movement made manifest in penitential processions during the crisis periods of 1260–61 and 1348–49, and reminds us of the central role in the medieval quest for spiritual and social benefits played by live spectacles that staged devotional imagery for collective perception. Following an examination of the origins of and changing attitudes towards the flagellants, the author shows how, in addition to its devotional and evangelical functions, self-scourging served as a 'magical technique' for defusing and controlling social and supernatural violence. Through reference to contemporary eyewitness accounts viewed through an anthropological lens, he explores the problem of ritual efficacy by posing some important questions relevant to viewer experience of flagellation, including: What psychological purpose did these spectacles serve? How were public rituals seen to have a redemptive effect? What was the relationship between social crisis and redemptive ritual? In the course of analysis, it becomes clear that the spiritual and social benefits of flagellation were only made available through the most crucial element of collective experience: seeing.

THE HOLY AND THE UNHOLY:
ANALOGIES FOR THE NUMINOUS IN
LATER MEDIEVAL ART

Debra Higgs Strickland

A complete un-knowing is the knowledge par
excellence of that which is beyond all things.

~ Pseudo-Dionysius¹

Medieval artists conceived of the holy and the unholy as a visual dichotomy, which they created using an expressive vocabulary of well-understood pictorial signs. The rendering of the human body was one of the principle ways of signifying a personage's holiness or unholliness according to the medieval principle, inherited from antiquity, that physical form is an external signifier of inner character.² And so in later medieval art, the blessed are beautiful and the damned are ugly, clarifying for viewers the moral opposition between the two. This is why, even though they are separated from each other stylistically by two centuries, Cimabue's famous portrait of Saint Francis painted on the transept wall of the lower chapel in the basilica in Assisi is in every way the formal antithesis of the hideous Satan glaring menacingly from a French Book of Hours (figs. 1, 2).³ In these two images, beauty and ugliness are created through the retention or distortion of normal human facial features and expressions, bodily proportions, and skin colouring. The same stark physiognomical contrast that signals the gulf between virtue and vice may be observed across the art of the later Middle Ages, especially in scenes that oppose Christ with the Jews, angels with demons, or saints with their torturers.⁴

¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *Epistle 1*, 1065A; trans. Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden, 1992), p. 19. Hereafter, all references to the work of Dionysius are to *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York, 1987).

² See Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, 2003), pp. 29–59.

³ On this image, see William R. Cook, *Images of St Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone and Glass from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320: A Catalogue* (Florence, 1999), p. 36, no. 12.

⁴ Numerous examples of such imagery are reproduced and discussed in Ruth

Pictorial representations of holiness and unholiness expressed through physiognomical form may be said to have as their primary purpose the communication of the moral or ethical dimension of Christianity as literally embodied by the personages portrayed. But medieval artists necessarily adopted other semiotic strategies to visualize the more profound aspect of Christianity which transcends its rational, moral dimensions. In this chapter, I shall explore how artists expressed the *non-rational* aspect of the holy and the unholy, what the German Lutheran philosopher and theologian, Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), identified as the *numinous* element in religion, which he examines at length in his seminal work, *Das Heilige* (1917; translated into English as *The Idea of the Holy*).⁵ The term, ‘numinous’, as Otto defines it, refers to the ineffable aspects of divinity that elude comprehension in rational or moral terms. Otto defines ‘the holy’ as a category of interpretation that contains a specific element or moment apart from the rational which remains inexpressible or ineffable in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts.⁶ For Otto, the holy denotes perfectly moral, absolute goodness; but beyond this it carries an overplus of meaning beyond the ethical element. It is this ‘unnamed Something’ or ‘extra’ meaning which can be isolated and given the name of *numinous*, allowing us to speak of a unique numinous category of value and of a definitely numinous state of mind. Otto contends that this numinous value or state cannot be strictly defined and it cannot be taught, but rather can only be evoked or awakened in the mind.⁷ He uses a particular phrase to describe numinous experiences: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. This phrase expresses the power of the divine to overwhelm the worshipper,

Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1993); Peter Jezler, *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1994); and Alison Stones, *Le Livre d'Images de Madame Marie: Reproduction intégral du manuscrit nouvelles acquisitions français 16251 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Paris, 1997).

⁵ Throughout this chapter I cite the English translation: Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2d ed., trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford, 1958). While it is not the purpose of this study to prove or disprove Otto's theories, which remain controversial, interested readers should consult Melissa Raphael, *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (Oxford, 1997); which places Otto's work in its broader theological context and summarizes the modern debate. For an outline of Otto's life and work, see Carl Heinz Ratschow, “Otto, Rudolf,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 25 (1995), 559–63.

⁶ See John Hick, “Ineffability,” *Religious Studies* 36 (2000), 35–46.

⁷ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 5–7. See also Raphael, *Rudolf Otto*, pp. 149–74; and Steven Ballard, *Rudolf Otto and the Synthesis of the Rational and the Non-Rational in the Idea of the Holy* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 26–40.

and also highlights the bipolar nature of divinity, capable of instilling awe which both repels and attracts.⁸

Although Otto's extensive world travels acquainted him with religious responses to the numinous in different cultures and religions, he maintained that such responses reach their greatest intensity and articulation in the practice of Christianity. They are also detectable in Christian art. According to Otto, Christian art, especially Gothic architecture, is "the most numinous of all types of art" because the 'sublimity' attained in artistic production of this period is seen by him as the most effective means of representing the inexpressible, and thus provides suitable visual analogies for the numinous.⁹

Informed by dogma, belief, and mystical experience, we might also expect works of medieval painting to address this non-rational aspect of the divine. What is rarely discussed, however, are the pictorial methods by which medieval painters attempted to express the inexpressible, perhaps because these methods tend to involve the non-mimetic, or abstract aspects of images produced during an artistic period so heavily viewed from iconographical perspectives.¹⁰ Otto fully acknowledged the limits of language in describing the numinous,¹¹ preferring the visual arts and music as more effective ways of expressing it.¹² And for centuries before him, it is clear that medieval artists recognized the potential of the visual to evoke devotional responses that transcend words.

While it might appear anachronistic or even inappropriate to approach the problem of medieval artistic representations of the holy and the unholy from an early twentieth-century Protestant perspective, there is a logic in so doing. Otto's ideas about divinity find many points of convergence with those articulated by a number of influential medieval theologians and mystics writing in disparate places and periods, some of whom he specifically acknowledges, such as Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c. 395), John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), Augustine of Hippo (354–430), and Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1328). In discussing

⁸ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 31–41. See also Ballard, *Rudolf Otto*, pp. 30–40.

⁹ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 65–68, 82.

¹⁰ On the signifying power of non-mimetic elements in art, see Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica* 1 (1969), 223–42; reprinted in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York, 1994).

¹¹ For a full investigation of this problem, see Leon Schlamm, "Numinous Experience and Religious Language," *Religious Studies* 28 (1992), 533–51.

¹² Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 2–7, 67–71.

the parallels between his own interpretations and earlier ones, Otto calls attention to the medieval concern with issues that centuries later were still central to Christian worshippers, most notably the problem of how the creature may comprehend the Creator.¹³ That it is concerned primarily with worshipper experience is what first attracted Gary Dickson to *The Idea of the Holy* during his formative studies of the phenomenology of religion undertaken in his late teens. Dickson's subsequent intellectual focus on medieval religious revivals, observances, crowds, devotions, cults, and movements reveals a similar orientation towards the history of religion as lived human experience rather than as abstract belief system.

In a further continuation of medieval tradition, Otto demonstrates the utility of the *via negativa* in his attempts to understand numinous experience, an approach rooted fundamentally in the fifth-century neoplatonic writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius. Dionysius wrote at length about the immeasurable and inexpressible nature of the hidden God, and maintained that God must transcend any formulation that the rational mind can make. His work inspired a continuous stream of medieval practitioners of the negative way that reached its apogee in a 'Dionysian renaissance' among the thirteenth-century Scholastics.¹⁴ It is true that Dionysius wrote nothing about the ordinary religious experience that Otto was at such pains to illuminate. However, Dionysian claims about the ineffable nature of God and the unsuitability of language for describing divinity were taken up by Otto and profoundly inform his own ideas of the worshipper's response to the numinous.

I suggest that together, these medieval and modern theological perspectives may deepen our understanding of later medieval religious representations for which iconographical methods alone provide

¹³ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 179–86; Rudolf Otto, "On the 'Wholly Other' in Religious History and Theology," in *Religious Essays: A Supplement to "The Idea of the Holy"*, trans. Brian Lunn (Oxford, 1931), pp. 78–94. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 1.42 (PG 45:601) and *Selected Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d ser., 5 (Oxford, 1893), p. 99; John Chrysostom, *De Incomprehensibili* (PG 48:721); Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 7.10, 9.10, 10, trans. William Watts, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 2 vols. (London, 1922), 1.370–73, 2.46–53, 2.74–205.; and Meister Eckhart, German sermon 27, trans. Raymond B. Blakney, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (New York, 1941), pp. 224–26.

¹⁴ See Jean Leclercq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," in Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, pp. 25–32; Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York, 1993), pp. 73–83; and Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995).

incomplete analytical explanations. Using both Dionysius and Otto as my principle reference points, I shall examine a small selection of later medieval images in order to ascertain how artists transcended the limits of iconography and language to communicate the more profound aspects of holiness and unholiness in their renderings of the divine and the damned. Most—but not all—of these pictorial examples are iconographically conventional and representative of many more of their kind. I shall argue that in various ways, all of them provide visual analogies for the experience of the numinous through their communication of an ‘unnamed Something’ that resists verbal description. I am not suggesting that medieval artists would have conceived of their images in exactly the ways I shall describe them. But by using an analytical method informed by both medieval and modern theology, I hope to further clarify an important dimension of medieval Christian art that is often ignored or overlooked, but that nevertheless is one of the definitive characteristics of artistic production of this period that deserves to be considered alongside iconographical, text-image and other types of analysis.¹⁵

Picturing the Holy

A fundamental problem faced by medieval artists seeking to represent divinity was how to picture the unseen. If all of the prototypes are invisible, then images of God, heaven, and the angels are necessarily metaphorical because they translate into material forms what cannot be seen by earthly eyes. Such representations fit Dionysius’s definition of ‘similar symbolism’, meaning images that are beautiful, simple, and agreeable to the senses but that ultimately are unsuitable for the expression of the hiddenness of the unseen. Simple symbolism, Dionysius reasons, is therefore better adapted to the education of beginners who cannot yet grasp the profundities of divinity but rather must approach it by way of base, material forms.¹⁶

¹⁵ This method recalls that of David Williams, who marshalled both Dionysian and postmodernist perspectives in his study of medieval monstrosity. See David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal, 1996). In its broad outlines, it also follows the analytical prescription put forward in Madeline Caviness, *Reframing Medieval Art: Difference, Margins, Boundaries* (2001), <<http://nils.lib.tufts.edu/Caviness>>. See esp. “Introduction: Soundings/Sightings”.

¹⁶ *Celestial Hierarchy* 1:121C–124A, pp. 146–47. See also René Roques, “Preface,” in *Pseudo-Dionysius*, p. 7; and Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, pp. 23–48.

One type of image that fits the Dionysian definition of similar symbolism is represented by the portrait of God found in the late fifteenth-century prayerbook of Maréchal de Gié (fig. 3). Here, God the Father is rendered as a venerable man whose great age signifies eternity. His human form carries positive meanings according to physiognomical theory, thus allowing contemporary viewers to understand his light skin, proportionate facial features, and flowing hair as signs of virtue.¹⁷ The accumulated wisdom signified by the Father's old age is a metaphor for God's omniscience. Omnipotence is expressed metaphorically through the figure's ecclesiastical garments, papal tiara, and the orb surmounted by a cross, all attributes of power that conflate the celestial hierarchy with the contemporary earthly one. God's halo and mandorla are familiar and luminous, abstract signs of his divinity, traditional visual analogies for what Otto describes as the overplus of meaning contained within the holy.

An image of heaven and hell from the thirteenth-century English De Brailes Psalter may be viewed from a Dionysian perspective as representative of another type of similar symbol (fig. 4). Because belief in heaven and hell as material realities was encouraged among the medieval faithful in numerous verbal and visual contexts, this image must be viewed in the first instance as didactic.¹⁸ Heaven, which occupies the top two-thirds of the pictorial space, is populated by orderly rows of angels. That the angels, widely understood as incorporeal beings, are given physical form was explicitly justified by Dionysius. In Chapter 15 of the *Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius explains that artistic representations of incorporeal beings can help lead the mind to an understanding of the nature of the divine. And so he interpreted each body part and attribute of anthropomorphized angels as representative of the various aspects of their divine essence. For example, the wings represent freedom from worldly attraction and the feet signify the upward climb to heaven and the speed of the perpetual journey to divine things.¹⁹

¹⁷ On physiognomical theory, see Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, pp. 37–41.

¹⁸ See Paul M. Quay, "Angels and Demons: The Teaching of IV Lateran," *Theological Studies* 42 (1981), 20–45. See also *The Iconography of Heaven*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, 1994); and *The Iconography of Hell*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler (Kalamazoo, 1992).

¹⁹ Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 15.332D, p. 186. For English translations of a selection of later medieval commentaries on Dionysius, see *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels*, trans. Steven Chase (New York, 2002).

But there is more in the De Brailes Psalter image than similar symbolism. Certain pictorial elements transcend material metaphor to offer visual analogies for inexpressible aspects of the divine. One of these analogies is silence. The inertia and the closed mouths of the angels suggest stillness, calm, and silence in the face of the deity whom they surround and adore. Dionysius wrote, “With a wise silence we do honor to the inexpressible”.²⁰ Similarly, Otto observes that silence is one of the main ways that the numinous can be represented in art, most effectively in music, because silence is a spontaneous reaction to the feeling of the power of the *numen*, the divine presence. In the psalter image, silence is broken at heaven’s lower exit, where some of the angels are falling while taking on the form of dark demons who tumble into the gaping beast-maw of hell below. The grimaces and open mouths of the fully transformed demons suggest shrieking and wailing in a cacophonous panic that contrasts sharply with the silent calm of the closed-mouth inhabitants of heaven above. This is an image that relies on oppositional, non-mimetic pictorial elements to more sharply distinguish the holy from the unholy: top versus bottom, light versus dark, order versus disorder, passivity versus action, and most dramatically, human versus bestial physicality. Dionysius insisted that divinity can only be described by what it is not—and it is none of these things.

Some medieval artists rendered forms that could evoke those moments of numinous experience identified by Otto as the *mysterium* and the *tremendum*. The moment of *tremendum* refers to the feelings of awe and dread in the presence of the deity, for which Otto offers the ideogram of ‘Wholly Other’. Otto defines as Wholly Other “that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which falls quite outside the limits of the ‘canny’ and therefore is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment”.²¹ Such mental astonishment marks the moment of the *mysterium*.²² Medieval artists who attempted to depict God as Wholly Other found solutions to the problem of picturing divinity that were quite oppositional from those observable in the images that we have observed so far.

²⁰ *Divine Names* 1.589B, p. 50.

²¹ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 25; “On the ‘Wholly Other’”.

²² Steven Ballard (*Rudolf Otto*, p. 36) observes that the ideogram of Wholly Other is closely related to the *aliud valde* of the *Confessions*, a work in which Augustine of Hippo describes how he turned from the rationalist philosophy of Aristotle and found greater meaning in deeply felt Christian experience. See Otto, “On the ‘Wholly Other,’” pp. 92–94; and Augustine, *Confessions* 4.16, 1.196–203 and as in n. 13, above.

That is, while the similar symbolism of God the Father, heaven and hell provides translations of the invisible and ineffable into material metaphors, images that visualize the wholly otherness of God provide visual analogies for ineffability itself. Medieval artists expressed the inexpressible through colour and other non-mimetic artistic elements, as well as extreme bodily distortion whose meaning directly violates the conventional rules of physiognomical theory.

In a well-known image from a thirteenth-century English psalter, God is rendered as a three-headed monster (fig. 5). From an Ottonian perspective, the figure is an appropriate representation of God on the grounds that the monstrous is just the *mysterium* in a gross form.²³ The image is at the same time an example of ‘dissimilar symbolism’, preferred by Dionysius for representing the holy: because its shapes are so completely at variance with what it really is, the viewer through contemplation of dissimilar symbolism may come to discover how the holy transcends all materiality.²⁴

This particular divine monster communicates an important point of medieval Christian doctrine, in that its three heads correspond to the three persons of the Trinity and by attaching them to one body, the artist conveys their perfect unity. The caption indicates that the kneeling figure represents Abraham, which identifies the historical context of the image as the Old Testament episode of the three angels who came to dinner (Gen. 18:1–16), widely understood as a typological parallel for the Trinity.²⁵ As a representation of the Trinity, then, the three-headed monster is simultaneously a vision of God as Wholly Other. Thus, Abraham’s attitude of reverence and awe before the Trinity may have had prescriptive value or have prompted viewers contemplating the image to recall their own experiences of the *mysterium tremendum*.

Although the concept of a three-headed Trinity was doctrinally justified, such monstrous images of God are rare in medieval art,

²³ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 80.

²⁴ *Celestial Hierarchy* 2.140D–141A, pp. 149–50. On dissimilar symbols, see also *Angelic Spirituality*, pp. 41–45; Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, pp. 53–57; and Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, pp. 40–41.

²⁵ On the iconography of this image, see G.J. Hoogewerf, “‘Vultus Trifons’: Emblema diabolico immagine improba della santissima Trinità,” *Rendiconti della Pontifica Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 19 (1942–43), 205–45; and W. Braunfels, *Die Heilige Dreifaltigkeit* (Düsseldorf, 1954), pp. 16–21. See also Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, pp. 243, 254–55. On the typological pairing of Abraham’s visit by the three angels with the Trinity, see M.R. James, “Pictor in Carmine,” *Archaeologia* 94 (1951), 141–66, esp. p. 154.

probably owing to the negative associations of physical deformity with sin and vice familiar to viewers from other artistic contexts. To the more literal-minded, a monstrous Trinity was perhaps also difficult to square with the belief that humans were created in God's image. But for those willing to contemplate the divine on a deeper level, the image conveys in a very economical way the typological parallel of Abraham's three angels and the Trinity, and also provides visual analogies both for God as Wholly Other and the numinous moment of *mysterium*. From a Dionysian perspective, a three-headed monster, as a dissimilar symbol, correctly portrays the Godhead as what it is not. From an Ottonian standpoint, the negative aspects of monstrosity in this image communicate the bipolar character of the holy, capable of stirring in the worshiper both attraction and revulsion.²⁶

Illuminated manuscript copies of Alighieri Dante's *Paradiso* express the ineffable in both words and pictures, and the pictorial visions may be analyzed from both Dionysian and Ottonian perspectives. An image from a copy of the *Paradiso* illuminated by Giovanni di Paolo (c. 1403–1482) around 1445 evokes the third moment of numinous experience, the *fascinans*, identified by Otto as the pole of the numinous that captivates, attracts and allures and therefore contrasts with the moment of the *tremendum* addressed in the previous image. In Canto XXVIII, Dante sees reflected in Beatrice's eyes the immateriality and indivisible unity of God as an infinitesimal point of light, the Pure Spark, surrounded by fiery circles (fig. 6). Following Dionysius, he maintains that humans can behold aspects of God if their souls are worthy: "their sum of merit is the measure of their sight".²⁷ Giovanni pictured that merit as great by depicting Dante gazing in rapture directly at the Godhead, a blazing, golden disk with a delicately drawn human face surrounded by concentric, circular areas of fiery colour that Beatrice recognizes as the nine choirs of angels. As a dissimilar symbol of God, this is a Dionysian image on two more counts. First, in the accompanying text, Dante identifies the nine choirs of angels with those in the *Celestial Hierarchy*; and second, fire is the preferred Dionysian metaphor

²⁶ That the iconography of the three-headed Trinity may have been historically grounded in demonic imagery is suggestive in this context. See R. Pettazzoni, "The Pagan Origins of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 9 (1946), 149–51.

²⁷ *Paradiso* XXVIII, lines 111–112, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine: Cantica III, Paradise* (New York, 1962), p. 304. This idea is expressed by Dionysius in *Divine Names* 1.588A–B, p. 49.

for divinity.²⁸ Beyond any verbal expression of the *fascinans*, the deep blue void surrounding the figures evokes the numinous because, as Otto observes, visual emptiness is analogous to silence in music as a reaction to the presence of the divine.²⁹

Representing the Unholy

Although representations of divinity remained a central project for medieval artists, during the later Middle Ages there was arguably an even greater artistic preoccupation with unholiness. One angel might bear a family resemblance to many others, but the visual variety observable in representations of demons is legion. This situation at first appears to contradict Dionysius's assertion that evil is nothing more than the absence of good and therefore without independent being or existence.³⁰ According to him, because it is a lack, a privation, the representation of evil is impossible except by means of metaphor.³¹ Just as artists gave the invisible heaven, angels, and God metaphorical, material forms; so they also found visual metaphors with which to represent the unholy. In the analysis of medieval art, it is useful to think of unholiness incarnate, rendered in physical forms opposed to those assigned to angels, Christ and the saints.

Medieval artists rendered physiognomically beautiful angels, and we have seen how these images may be interpreted from a Dionysian perspective as didactic, similar symbols. Later medieval angels often wear white and gold garments and sometimes sport colourful wings, as in the image of heaven and hell from the fifteenth-century *Livre de la Vigne de Nostre Seigneur* (fig. 7).³² They tend to stand or hover at rapt

²⁸ *Paradiso* XXVIII, lines 130–132: “When Dionysius with ardent zest/Pondered these orders of angelic bliss,/He named them in this way, the true and best” (p. 304). On the fire metaphor, see *Celestial Hierarchy* 15.328C–329C, pp. 183–84.

²⁹ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 68.

³⁰ *Divine Names* 4.732C–732D, p. 94.

³¹ Much later, the concept of demonic emptiness received interesting treatment by the Cistercian, Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–c. 1240), who claimed that demons have no backs and therefore must always back away from us in order to conceal their hollowness (*Dialogus miraculorum* 3.6). See Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 2 vols., trans. Henry von Essen Scott and Charles Cooke Swinton Bland (London, 1929), 1:132; and A. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. J.M. Bak and P.A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), p. 188.

³² On this manuscript, see Rosemary Muir Wright, *Art and Antichrist in Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 170–71; and Frances Carey, ed., *The Apocalypse and the Shape*

attention, or sit silently praying, or engage in some type of music-making. But medieval demons undertake a much broader variety of activities—none of them good—and as observable here and elsewhere in the *Livre de la Vigne* imagery, their physiognomies often incorporate a baroque set of negative pictorial signs, which may include dark skin; deformity; bestial features such as fangs or beaks, horns, hooves, and tails; ugly grimaces; and supernumerary bodily orifices (figs. 2, 4, 7, 8). Demonic attributes, such as military weapons, pitchforks, fleshhooks, and flails, are associated with warfare, agricultural labour, and torture; and the torments inflicted by demons upon the damned include some of those familiar to medieval viewers from earthly spectacle, including public punishment.³³

Such demonic traits do not directly recall the teachings of Dionysius, who assured his readers that devils really cannot be evil by nature, because like all creatures, they owe their origins to God, who created only good. However, Dionysius goes on to explain that good is lacking to demons by virtue of their inability to hold on to their original source. This means that evil is impermanent, because permanence is only a property of the good. Devils, in other words, have moved far away from their capacity to be perfect but in theory could reclaim it.³⁴ Medieval images of devils, however, do not suggest impermanence, even though some representations of the angels falling do acknowledge their original, created state of goodness by charting a physical change from perfect to monstrous as a visual metaphor for their spiritual transition from moral perfection to absolute evil (fig. 4). But medieval images that forecast a return trip from evil back to good are unknown to me. As far as I am aware, in conventional images of hell and the damned there are no artistic indications that ugly demons could ever regain the God-given goodness signified by their former physiognomical beauty.

Beyond the realm of the theological, medieval images of demons functioned socially as a tool for collective denigration of the perceived enemies of the Church, especially the Jews. In tandem with contemporary biblical exegesis, literature, sermons and drama, medieval artists

of *Things to Come* (London, 1999), pp. 93–94. In Scriptures, angels wear linen, white, and/or gold, and are described as ‘bright’ (Dan. 10:5, 12:6; 2 Macc. 3:26; Matt. 28:3; John 20:12; Rev. 19:14). See *Angelic Spirituality*, pp. 10, 44.

³³ On this subject, see Mitchell Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London, 1999).

³⁴ *Divine Names* 4.724C–725C, pp. 90–91.

created visual correspondences between demons and Jews that effectively conflated the two. The most blatant examples situate Jews in demonic company, as in the notorious image added to the 1233 Roll of the Exchequer, which shows Isaac of Norwich surrounded by other Jews and demons who share a common space and a family resemblance (fig. 9). The supposed Jewish love of money and engagement in usury is highlighted on the far left by the demon overseeing another Jew weighing gold coins. Isaac, in the centre, is three-faced, a feature that carries the negative meanings of physical deformity, mocks the Trinity, and also implies an association between Jews and the Antichrist, who in other artistic contexts is often depicted with three faces.³⁵

The vocabulary of demonic forms also supplied medieval artists with the tools to promote the powerful accusation that the Jews killed Christ. The enlarged eyes and noses, ugly grimaces, and beards of the stereotypical, pictorial Jew regularly included in images of Christ's torments were grounded in demon portraiture. Such stereotyped figures feature in a thirteenth-century image, representative of many others, of the mocking of Christ from the Fitzwarin Psalter (fig. 10). In this single image, the incarnate holy and unholy are expressed through the familiar physiognomical opposition noted above in relation to the individual portraits of Saint Francis and Satan (figs. 1, 2). Here, it is Christ who is light-skinned, beautiful, proportionate and serene; as contrasted with his dark, ugly and agitated Jewish tormentors. In such images, headgear and other costume details facilitated Christian efforts to collapse the chronological distance between New Testament and medieval Jews, which in turn helped to justify ongoing accusations of a Jewish-led, anti-Christian conspiracy.³⁶

The image of Isaac of Norwich is a reminder that next to the Devil himself, the most unsettling medieval figure of unholiness incarnate was Antichrist (fig. 9). As noted above, the image mocks and condemns Isaac, a Norwich Jew, by portraying him with the three faces often assigned to Antichrist in medieval iconography, and by including an assortment of demons among his surrounding contemporaries. As this image makes

³⁵ Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, pp. 77–79. For a more detailed discussion of this image, see Frank Felsenstein, *Antisemitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660–1830* (Baltimore, 1995), pp. 27–29.

³⁶ Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (1943; reprint, Philadelphia, 1983), pp. 97–108; Andrew Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age 1200–1600* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 93–130; Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, pp. 211–21, 226–39.

plain, Antichrist, like the demons, was inextricably linked to the Jews, and so the Antichrist tradition became an important anti-Jewish weapon in the contemporary Christian arsenal: medieval Christians believed that Antichrist would be a Jew, born of the tribe of Dan, and that Jews all over the world would accept him as their messiah and assist him in his attempted overthrow of all of Christendom.³⁷

Pictorial representations further augmented the anti-Jewish aspects of the legend and demonstrated the extent of Antichrist's evil by rendering scenes from his life in unholy parallel to the life of Christ.³⁸ For example, far from remaining a virgin *in et post partum*, Antichrist's mother, expected to be a Jewish whore, was to suffer a caesarean birth to be administered by a demonic midwife, as shown in an image from an Antichrist blockbook produced around 1456 in Nuremberg (fig. 11). Because the viewers of such imagery would have been familiar with conventional scenes from the life of Christ (in this case, his nativity), it is clear that the Nuremberg image and others that depict Antichrist's birth and subsequent deeds—his blasphemous preaching, false miracles, and faked resurrection—gained power and created revulsion by their audacious redeployment of the iconography of the holy in the representation of the unholy.

Numinous Horror

Beyond iconography, just as medieval artists provided visual analogies for the non-rational aspects of the holy, they also addressed an 'unnamed Something' in their images of the unholy in ways that could awaken in the minds of viewers their own experiences of evil. Otto conceptualizes 'numinous horror' as the *mysterium tremendum* cut loose from the other elements of the numinous and intensified to *mysterium horrendum*. The object of the horror provoked by encounters with evil, therefore, may be designated as the negatively numinous.³⁹

³⁷ The authoritative source for this claim was Abbot Adso's tenth-century *Libellus de Antichristo* (trans. John Wright in *The Play of Antichrist* [Toronto, 1967], pp. 100–10), which also informed the Antichrist plays popular during the later Middle Ages. See Klaus Aichele, *Das Antichristdrama des Mittelalters, der Reformation und Gegenreformation* (The Hague, 1974).

³⁸ On the concept of parallelism between Antichrist and Christ, see Linus Urban Lucken, *Antichrist and the Prophets of Antichrist in the Chester Cycle* (Washington, DC, 1940), pp. 14–17.

³⁹ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 106–107, n. 2; pp. 122–24.

Medieval artists found opportunities to visualize the non-rational aspects of evil that have the power to repel during the *horrendum* moment of the experience of the negatively numinous, a response that may be seen in opposition to the *fascinans* element experienced in the presence of the deity. Two different solutions to the problem of how to evoke the *horrendum* moment in Antichrist representations may be observed in a pair of images separated by three centuries. The first, from the fifteenth-century *Livre de la Vigne*, depicts Antichrist as a mortal man with a red demon's head lodged eerily atop and slightly in front of his human one (fig. 12).⁴⁰ Antichrist's huge size affirms his power, and the demon's head—visible to viewers of the image but presumably not to the human spectators depicted below—affirms his evil nature and allegiance. As in the image of Isaac of Norwich (fig. 9), the narrative details of the *Livre de la Vigne* Antichrist scene also denigrate specific contemporary groups. Standing below Antichrist in fifteenth-century dress are a turbaned Saracen (Muslim) and a hatted Jew in conversation with a woman. These figures represent the constituencies who will be the first to succumb to Antichrist, thus underscoring their moral degeneracy in the here-and-now.

In her much earlier rendering, the Rhenish prophetess and mystic, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) used very different pictorial methods to evoke the horror of Antichrist as she herself experienced it (fig. 13). The Antichrist portrait survives in a 1930s copy of an image from a lost twelfth-century manuscript containing an illustrated account of her collection of prophetic visions known as the *Scivias*.⁴¹ The images in the original manuscript, dated 1160–1175, are thought to have been designed by Hildegard herself and thus to provide a rare glimpse of medieval mystical experience.⁴² This is a subject of special interest to Rudolf Otto, who recognized mysticism as the most numinous of

⁴⁰ R. Wright, *Art and Antichrist*, p. 171.

⁴¹ English translation: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York, 1990). See also Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen im "Liber Scivias" der Hildegard von Bingen: Die Wucht der Vision und die Ordnung der Bilder* (Wiesbaden, 1998) (colour facsimile); and Madeline Caviness, "Hildegard of Bingen: Some Recent Books," *Speculum* 77 (2002), 113–20.

⁴² Madeline H. Caviness, "Hildegard as Designer of the Illustrations to Her Works," in *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art*, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke (London, 1998), pp. 29–62; and "To See, Hear, and Know All at Once," in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. B. Newman (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 110–24.

religious experiences.⁴³ From this perspective, we might hypothesize that a medieval image of a mystical vision created by an artist who was also the seer might contain an especially pronounced expression of the ineffable.⁴⁴ While it is necessary to interpret Hildegard's unique images in relation to the accompanying text and to earlier iconographical traditions, beyond such comparisons, it has been observed that her images also communicate aspects of her visions that could not be expressed with words.⁴⁵

The Antichrist image in particular provides a striking visual analogy for the non-rational element of Hildegard's experience, and prescribes for its viewers a similar response not to the image itself, but to its negatively numinous prototype. In Book 3 of the *Scivias*, Hildegard paired a verbal description of her vision of the rise and fall of Antichrist with a disturbing portrait that marshals the negative signifying power of the monstrous (fig. 12).⁴⁶ The visionary context of the image defines monstrosity not as a dissimilar symbol of God, as in the previously examined portrait of the three-headed Trinity (fig. 5), but rather as a monstrous sign of absolute evil. In the upper register on the left, five menacing beasts stand for the villainous world leaders to come. Directly below, Antichrist is rendered as a dark, grotesque, grimacing phallic head emerging from between the cut and bleeding legs of a large, golden, crowned female standing next to a golden altar. This female figure is identified in the text as Ecclesia, seen by Hildegard

⁴³ "Mysticism is the stressing to a very high degree, indeed the overstressing, of the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion" (Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 22). On the relationship between the mystical and the numinous, see Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 21–25, 36–39; and idem, *Mysticism East and West* (London, 1932), esp. pp. 181–87 on Eckhart's mysticism. See also P.C. Almond, *Rudolf Otto, An Introduction to His Philosophical Theology* (Chapel Hill, 1984), pp. 127–29; and Leon Schlamm, "Rudolf Otto and Mystical Experience," *Religious Studies* 27 (1991), 389–98. Otto's posited relationship between the numinous and the mystical has been challenged by modern critics. For a summary of the debate, see Raphael, *Rudolf Otto*, pp. 151–56.

⁴⁴ On the relationship between medieval art and mysticism with reference to Dionysian thought, see Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 118–42.

⁴⁵ Richard Emmerson, "The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*: Image, Word, Commentary, and Visionary Experience," *Gesta* 41 (2002), p. 107; Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen*, p. 12. On visionary imagery, see also Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, pp. 162–67; and Michael Camille, "Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. R.S. Nelson (Chicago, 2000), pp. 197–223.

⁴⁶ *Scivias*, Book 3, Vision 11, pp. 493–511. The most thorough analysis of this image is Emmerson, "Representation of Antichrist," pp. 95–110.

as bloodily violated by Antichrist.⁴⁷ But Hildegard next saw Ecclesia vindicated by her bridegroom, the Son of Man, shown blessing on a diagonal from the right side of the upper register, situated in a golden void suggestive of the numinous. In the lower register, to the right of Ecclesia, the monstrous, the eschatological and the scatological merge, as a grimacing Antichrist with blood-red eyes perches atop a mountain covered in excrement as he is struck down by a golden thunderbolt. To the right, Antichrist is shown a third time, fallen at the base of the mountain, dead with closed eyes.

Hildegard's images have the potential to transport the viewer beyond the narrative of Antichrist to a contemplation of the numinous horror of his unholiness. As an oppositional parallel to the *tremendum* response to the *mysterium* suggested by the psalter figure of Abraham kneeling before the Trinity (fig. 5), the fearful astonishment of the witnesses gesturing towards Antichrist's demise in the lower register functions as part of the Antichrist narrative, but also suggests a human response to the moment of the *horrendum* in the presence of the negatively numinous.

The *Scivias* image of Antichrist and the psalter image of Abraham before the Trinity also bear witness to the different functions of monstrosity in medieval art. In the psalter image, monstrosity is a dissimilar symbol of God, and thereby evokes divinity; but in Hildegard's image, monstrosity is a sign of Antichrist's extreme moral degeneracy, and as such is more appropriately analyzed as an artistic use of physiognomical distortion for its negative signifying power rather than as a visual analogy for the *via negativa*. These oppositional functions of monstrosity in art are analogous to the bipolar character of the holy: capable of generating attraction as well as revulsion, with a majesty that overwhelms and fills the worshiper with awe.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For a psychoanalytical interpretation of this image, see Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, pp. 167–68. On possible physiological influences on its design, see Caviness, “Gender Symbolism and Text Image Relationships: Hildegard of Bingen’s *Scivias*,” in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 84–87; reprinted in Madeline Caviness, *Art in the Medieval West and Its Audience* (Aldershot, 2001), article VII.

⁴⁸ The positive and negative significance of monstrosity is discussed in Williams, *Deformed Discourse*; and Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, pp. 241–55. On the numinous element of *majestas*, see Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 19–23; and Ballard, *Rudolf Otto*, pp. 33–34.

Conclusions

By examining just a few medieval images representative of many more of their kind, I hope to have shown that contemporary artists created images of the holy and the unholy that reached beyond sacred texts or specific points of Christian dogma. Even when working within iconographical conventions, medieval artists used different semiotic strategies to evoke moments of the non-rational element of divinity and of evil, and to represent the wholly otherness of God. As didactic tools, these images reinforced Christian beliefs about heaven and hell and their respective occupants. But as objects of contemplation, they also may have helped viewers to recall their own experiences of the numinous, including the negatively numinous, and to facilitate subsequent religious experiences.

As instruments of coercion, images of the unholy incarnate characterized evil as an active threat to Christians, thus encouraging allegiance to Christ in exchange for the spiritual protection offered by the Church, its saints and its sacraments. Images of unholiness also functioned socially and politically: by locating it in clearly defined other places, artists distanced evil from the Church itself, and pejorative images of Jews and Muslims in association with demons and Antichrist helped to justify the oppression and annihilation of both groups at home and abroad.

The relationships between medieval images of the holy and the unholy, their literary points of reference, and visual analogies for an unnamed Something are complex. Acknowledgement of the non-rational element of the divine relevant to the creature's experience of the creator in the practice of the Christian religion was aided by medieval artists who created visual expressions of the inexpressible. Rudolf Otto and his medieval forbears found remarkably complementary ways to articulate this important aspect of Christian experience that paradoxically resists verbal description. In the medieval contexts under consideration, I take the Ottonian view that visual art was a better way than verbal language to evoke the ineffable, and suggest that the specific pictorial signs discussed above provided suitable analogies for medieval experience of the numinous. I further suggest that it is divinity's non-rational element, with which theologians continue to grapple, that is essential to our understanding of how medieval Christian imagery functioned in various contemplative, devotional and mystical contexts; and that visual analogies for the numinous are what differentiate an image that just tells a story from one that recounts, or points the way towards, a

personal experience of the divine. This approach also invites us to look for potential applications of the *via negativa* in our analyses of medieval imagery, to broaden our analytical perspectives with the recognition that in some cases we are looking not at representations of what divinity *is*, but rather of what it is *not*.

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THE MEASURE OF THE VIRGIN'S FOOT

Michael Bury*

In 1610, the Venetian engravers and print dealers Francesco Valegio (fl. 1598–1624) and Catarino Doino (fl. 1596–1641) were sent to prison and subsequently fined ten ducats for having printed and sold without licence the “*forma intitolata Misura del sacratissimo piede della Madonna*”.¹ The proceedings were in the hands of the *Esecutori contra la Bestemmia* (Elders against blasphemy), a magistracy instituted by the Council of Ten in 1537, and which in 1543 had been given responsibility for the supervision of printed materials in Venice.² Apart from Valegio and Doino, others had also been imprisoned at the same time for handling impressions of this print: Donato Graziosi, Giacomo Paulini (both described as printers) and Giacomo Penesi. Because their crime was simply to have offered the unlicensed print for sale, they each received a fine of only one ducat.

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¹ Archivio di Stato, Venezia (hereafter ASV), Esecutori contro la Bestemmia, Notatorio di sentenze et termin. 1593–1614, b 61, fol. 172v. 12 July 1610:

Gli Ecc.mi Signori Nicolo Ferro, Cost.n Renier et Vidal Lando Essecutori contra la Biastemmia inteso il processo formato contra Francesco Valesio et Cattarin Doni intagliadori di stampe in rame, et contra Donato Gratosi et Giacomo Paulini pur stampatori et contra Giacomo Penesi tutti carcerati se bene volontariamente venuti all’obediencia per haver tutti loro venduto la forma intitolata Misura del sacratissimo piede della Madonna senza l’ordinaria licenza registrata nel magistrato de SS SS Ecc.me. et di piu li sopradetti Valesio et Doni haverla anche stampata senza licenza predetta li hanno sententiati et condannati ut infra videlicet. Che li antedetti Francesco et Cattarin pagar debbano ducati dieci per cadauno da esser dispensati giusta la parte dell’ecc.mo Consiglio di X de 6 Aprile 1589 et nelle spese. Item che Donato Gratosi, Giacomo Penesi et Giacomo Paulini sopradetti pagar debbano ducati uno per cadauno da esser dispensato come di sopra et nelle spese.

The document was briefly noted by G. Pesenti, “Libri censurati a Venezia nei secoli XV e XVI,” *La Bibliofilia* 58 (1956), p. 27.

² Horatio Forbes Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press: An Historical Study Based Upon Documents* (London, 1891), p. 78.

The image in question, of which no impression has been traced, can be reconstructed at least approximately from surviving later works that are evidently closely related in subject matter. Among the large collection of woodblocks from the Modenese printing firm of Soliani, acquired by the Galleria Estense at Modena in 1887, is an image identified in lettering on the block as the *Misura del piede della beatissima Vergine*.³ A modern impression shows two angels kneeling on clouds holding an outline of what looks like the sole of a shoe (fig. 1). Above hovers the Virgin as intercessor. She stands on a cloud with her arms raised and extended in the ancient attitude of prayer.⁴

It is clear from other examples that this was an indulgence image; the indulgence was to be gained by kissing the image and saying certain prayers. What seems to be the earliest traceable record of the indulgence is found on a page in Rivet's *Apologia* of 1639, which shows a Spanish example of the image (fig. 2). The indulgence was said to have been granted by Pope John XXII to whomever kissed the *Misura* three times and said three *Ave Marias*.⁵ A similar marble version is found to the left of the altar of the Virgin in the oratory of the Madonna di Cimaronco near Arosio in the Ticino (figs. 3, 4). The marble relief of a footprint is set horizontally into a pier; above it is the outline of a sole, also of marble, with an inscription that translates: "The true measure of the foot of the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, taken from a shoe to be found in a nunnery at Saragossa in Spain. Pope John XXII conceded an indulgence of 700 years to whoever kisses it three times saying three

³ Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici per le province di Modena e Reggio Emilia, *I legni incisi della Galleria Estense: Quattro secoli di stampa nell'Italia settentrionale* (Modena, 1986), p. 139, no. 126. The block measures 185 × 302 mm; the outline of the sole itself measures 195 mm in length and is 65 mm wide at its maximum.

⁴ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christliche Kunst*, 5 vols. (1969–1990), vol. 4.2, *Maria* (Gütersloh, 1980), p. 25.

⁵ André Rivet, *Apologia pro sanctissima Virgine Maria* (Leiden: Hegerus & Hackius, 1639), Book 2, chap. 9, p. 292:

ex figura soleae B. Mariae Virginis, quam in Hispania sculptam, typis expressam, et cum licentia impressam servo, hac forma, quam ad exemplar hispanicum imitandem curavirunt, cum inscriptione quae in medio soleae legitur, additis sequentibus verbis lingua vulgari, Hispanica: Medida del Pie sanctissimo de nuestra signora EL PAPA IVAN. XXII. Concedio Quien bezare tres vezes, y rezare tres Ave Marias devotamente a lu bendito honor y reverencia gana setecientos annos de pedon. Yes libre de much spoeligros. Tiniendo la Bulla de la Sancta Cruzada. Impresa con licentia. Dirigida a la devocion del Cavallera de Gracia.

On the foot itself: "Medida del pie sanctissimo de nuestra si." I owe my knowledge of this image to the kindness of Tom Tolley.

Ave Marias. Confirmed by Pope Clement VIII in the year 1602.”⁶ It is interesting to note that the formula is more indirect and didactic than that adopted in other examples of indulgence prints, such as Israhel van Meckenham’s *Mass of Saint Gregory*, where the devotee is simply and directly instructed on the requisite action and its reward.⁷

In the light of these examples, it is possible that the engraving which caused so much difficulty in Venice in 1610 consisted of a similar combination of a visual representation of a foot, or of the sole of a shoe, and an inscription identifying what it was, reporting the indulgence and the authority behind it with instructions about how the indulgence was to be obtained. If that was indeed the case, it would provide an important clue as to why the image would have been problematic enough to arouse the attention of the authorities.

The reason for the prosecution, according to the official record, was the fact that the print had been issued without a licence. Venetian legislation of 1527 had forbidden the printing of any new book unless it had been examined by the Council of Ten and received a licence, that is to say, a permission to publish (*imprimatur*).⁸ The procedures were tightened up over the following decades. In September 1566 came a

⁶ La giusta Misura del Piede / della santissima Vergine / Maria Madre di Dio cav / ata da una Scarpa che si / ritrova in un convento / di Monache di Serago / za in Spagna // Papa Giovanni XXII / concesse Indulgenza / d’anni 700 a chi / la bacia tre volte / con dire tre Ave / Marie confermato / da Papa Clemente / VIII l’anno 1602 (Siro Borrani, *Il Ticino sacro: Memorie religiose della Svizzera Italiana* [Lugano, 1896], p. 209). See also Stephan Beissel, *Wallfahrten zu unserer lieben Frau in Legende und Geschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1913), p. 53. The oratory of the Madonna di Cimaronco is a small church on the road going up to the village of Arosio. Under the portico, above the entrance portal, is the following inscription:

1649 COMVNE DI AROSIO / QVESTA CHIESA DEDICATA A ONORE / DELLA BEATA VERGINE MARIA DEL RONCH / O TERETORIO DEL SVDETO COMVNE E FA / BRICATA A SVE SPESE E DELE MOSINA IN / QTA VI E VNO LEGATO DI VNA MESATVTILI C[or G]IR / FESTIVI IN PERPETVO EP QVESTO IL S / VDETO COMVNE NON VOLE CHE NISVNO / ABIA IVS NE RAGIONE NE POSA A QV / ISTARENNE IN PARAMENTI NE I / N CIRA NE IN ELEMOSINA SOL / LO IL COMVNE ET OMNI DI AROSIO

⁷ There are many other examples of indulgence prints from the fifteenth century onwards, such as Israhel van Meckenham’s *Mass of Saint Gregory*, with its inscription detailing the indulgence attached to the Arms of Christ. The inscription reads: “Whoever piously recites before the instruments of Christ’s Passion seven Credos, seven Pater Nosters and Ave Marias and as often as he does shall enjoy an indulgence of 20,000 years” (Alan Shestack, *Fifteenth Century Engravings of Northern Europe*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art [Washington, DC, 1967], no. 214).

⁸ Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press*, p. 68.

ruling that all licences granted were to be registered with the *Esecutori contra la Bestemmia*. The reason for the 1566 ruling was that previously the *Esecutori* had not officially been informed about what had been licensed. Armed with such information they would henceforth find it much easier to identify cases where publishers had flouted the rules and had failed to obtain such permission to publish, thereby making prosecutions much more likely.⁹ These rules were intended for books, but there were at least two cases around 1566–7 when prints were subjected to them as well. The most famous example is Titian's application for permission to publish the prints that he was having Cornelis Cort engrave for him. Titian obtained a licence from the Council of Ten on 22 January 1567, covering the engraving of his composition known as the *Paradiso* and also of other prints that he might make in the future.¹⁰ The surviving documents show that the procedures Titian followed were identical to those laid out for books. However, if the documentary record is read systematically, it emerges that the 1566–7 cases were exceptional.

In order fully to understand this evidence it is necessary to know a little more about the Venetian regulations covering printed materials. After Titian obtained his licence from the Council of Ten, he then applied to the Senate for a privilege: one of the prerequisites for a successful application to the Senate for the grant of a privilege was that the item had already been given a licence by the Council of Ten. There has been a great deal of confusion about privileges in the modern literature. They have been regarded as forerunners of modern systems of copyright, but this is true only in a very distant way.¹¹ In the sixteenth century, the grant of a privilege was essentially the grant of a commercial monopoly. Publishers of books or prints valued privileges because they thereby obtained an official guarantee of their exclusive rights to produce and market nominated items for a specified period of time, usually between five and twenty years, within Venetian territories. Titian's privilege, granted in 1567, was for fifteen years.

⁹ Pesenti ("Libri censurati," p. 27) gives various examples of printers of books being fined for having failed to get a licence.

¹⁰ Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy 1550–1620*, exhibition catalogue, The British Museum (London, 2001), pp. 176–77.

¹¹ Michael Bury, "Infringing Privileges and Copying in Rome, c. 1600," *Print Quarterly* 22 (2005), p. 134.

It is these rules and regulations, and the survival of the relevant books of the institutions involved in their administration, that allow the modern historian to understand the ways in which different kinds of printed materials were treated in practice. In particular, it is possible to see the extent to which the rules about licences were actually being enforced by examining the applications for privileges. There, if anywhere, it would have been possible for a government concerned with regulating the publication of printed materials to enforce the law, ensuring that anything granted a privilege had indeed already received a licence. What emerges from a systematic reading of the documents is extremely interesting. Whereas from the 1550s into the early seventeenth century all privilege applications for books are accompanied by proof that a licence had been granted, those for prints—apart from the two 1566–7 cases—largely are not. The second half of the 1560s may have been an exceptional time in general. John Martin saw the whole period from 1565 to 1570 as one of particularly intense repressive activity, and this may explain the unusual phenomenon of prints being subjected to such scrutiny.¹²

However, there are exceptions to the situation described: these involve prints that are accompanied by significant words. For example, a licence was issued to allow the publication of a print by Cesare Vecellio directed against blaspheming. Unfortunately, no examples of this print appear to survive; however it evidently consisted of a combination of words and image. On 19 March 1575, the Council of Ten licensed it, following assurances that “in certain writings in Latin and in the vernacular about the image of the name of Jesus taken from holy scripture and directed against blaspheming, there is nothing contrary to the law...” Subsequently a privilege was issued to Vecellio on 28 September 1575.¹³ The same point about words being treated differently from images emerges even more forcibly from the case of Andrea Vicentino’s *Marriage at Cana* on 14 May 1594. A licence was asked for and granted for the large two-plate etching executed by Preyss after Andrea’s design, but it is exclusively and quite explicitly concerned only with the words

¹² John J. Martin, *Venice’s Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 183–86.

¹³ The Riformatori dello Studio di Padova certified “come in alcuni scritti sopra la imagine del nome di jesu latini et vulgari, cavati dalla sacra scrittura contra la biastema, non vi è cosa alcuna contraria alle leggi, concedeno licentia, che possono eser stampati in questa città...” (ASV, Senato Terra, filza 67).

that were to be included on the image.¹⁴ This example shows that even a short piece of text accompanying a visual image could mean that the print required a licence.¹⁵ Evidently the authorities were much more anxious about the dangers of words than they were about the dangers of images.

In the light of these observations, it is probable that the printing and selling without a licence of an image accompanied by text would be taken seriously. This may be a sufficient explanation for the action of the *Esecutori contra la bestemmia* in the case of the *Misura* of the Virgin's foot, if, as seems likely, it contained a statement of the indulgence. However, there is an additional factor which might have made that case an especially serious one: we know that doubts arose about the authenticity of the indulgence and it was officially condemned as spurious by the Roman Congregation on Indulgences and Sacred Relics.

In a list of false indulgences issued by the Congregation on 7 March 1678, there appears one alleged to have been granted by John XXII for kissing the measure of the sole of the Virgin's foot.¹⁶ The Congregation had only been created in 1669 by Clement IX (although it had actually started work in 1668).¹⁷ Whether these doubts about authenticity already existed as early as 1610, it is impossible to establish. It will be recalled that on the marble at Arosio, in addition to the naming of John XXII as the original author of the indulgence, there is a reference to its confirmation by Clement VIII in 1602. John XXII's pontificate—1316–1334—was sufficiently distant for the record to have been lost or distorted, but Clement VIII (1592–1605) was close in time. While it may have been relatively easy to fabricate an indulgence purportedly granted by John XXII, it would have been far more difficult to get away with a claim that Clement VIII had confirmed it. Clement had set up a commission to regulate past abuses over indulgences and to

¹⁴ “Si concede licentia che si possino stampar le sopra scritte parole sotto il disegno delle nozze fatto da Andrea da Vicenza Pittore stampato in rame...” (ASV, Senato Terra, filza 131).

¹⁵ Bury, *The Print in Italy*, p. 104, no. 65.

¹⁶ “... a Joanne XXII obsculantibus Mensuram Plantae Pedis B. Mariae Virginis...” (A. Prinziavalli, *Resolutiones seu decreta authentica Sacrae Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis praepositae ab anno 1668 ad annum 1864* [Rome, 1862], p. 13). It is not dated here, but in the *Decreta authentica Sacrae Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis ab anno 1668 ad annum 1882*, 2 vols. (Ratisbon, 1883), 1:11–15, it is dated 7 March 1678. This was mentioned by Stephan Beissel, *Geschichte der Verehrung Marias im 16 und 17 Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1910), p. 107.

¹⁷ Niccolo Del Re, *La curia romana*, 4th ed. (Rome, 1998), pp. 382–84.

provide rules for future grants.¹⁸ This was the forerunner of Clement IX's Congregation. To have falsely invoked Clement's approval would have been to make an especially large and risky claim because of the Pope's known care in handling such material. But in the end, it is quite impossible to know the truth of the matter.

However, if there had been doubts in 1610, it would have given the Venetian authorities special reason to proceed against Valegio, Doino and the others. They would have been trying to abolish a non-authentic devotion, and there is reason to assume that whatever the official position, the devotion was widespread and very strongly rooted. Even after the condemnation of 1678, the devotion appears to have continued, as testified by a print in the Bertarelli collection at Milan, dateable to around 1830 (fig. 5).¹⁹ The claim that the indulgence had been granted by John XXII and confirmed by Clement VIII is more or less exactly as it appears on the Arosio example; only the number of years of release from purgatory is altered—reduced from 700 to 300.

It is important to be precise about the nature of the image. This is not the Virgin's footprint, but the measure (*misura*) of her foot. Knowledge of the *misura* was said to have been derived from the measurement of one of her shoes.²⁰ On the Arosio example, the shoe was identified as belonging to a convent of nuns at Saragossa, while on the nineteenth century print, two shoes are cited: one in an unspecified monastery in Spain and the other at the Santa Casa at Loreto. We know that there were shoes of the Virgin in Spain in the seventeenth century because of discussions about whether painters should represent her barefoot or

¹⁸ Del Re, *La curia romana*, p. 382; Paolo Paruta, *La legazione di Roma di Paolo Paruta (1592–1595)*, 3 vols., ed. Giuseppe de Leva (Venice, 1887), 1:256, letter of 3 July 1593:

Tratta Sua Santità di fare una nuova congregazione con particolare carico della materia delle indulgenze, si per regolare qualche abuso passato, come per provvedere a' disordini nell'avvenire, si che queste cose abbino a passare con maggiore regola e riserva che non hanno fatto per il passato; benchè già Sua Santità se ne mostri molto parca e circospetta.

Also in his report on his embassy to Rome, Paruta noted Clement's concern about indulgences and the need to remove abuses. See Eugenio Albèri, ed., *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti* (Florence, 1857), ser. 2, vol. 4, p. 368.

¹⁹ Achille Bertarelli, *Le stampe popolari italiane*, introduced by Clelia Alberici (Milan, 1974), p. 32. I owe my knowledge of this print to Beverly Brown and David Gentilcore.

²⁰ Beissel (*Wallfahrten*, p. 53) reports on imprints of the Virgin's foot that were venerated in various places, in particular at Pampelona and at Poczajow in Lithuania. They were believed to be the traces of miraculous appearances made by the Virgin, but they are not cited as sources for the measure of her foot.

not. Vicente Carducho, for example, wrote in 1633 of the impropriety of painting the Virgin without shoes: “The Virgin our Lady wore shoes, as is proved by the much venerated relic of one of them from her divine feet in the principal church at Burgos.”²¹ It may be that the devotion to the *misura* had a Spanish origin as the example recorded by Rivet suggests. Throughout Europe, among the relic collections of many churches were shoes purporting to have belonged to the Virgin, but it is still the case that the active cults recorded even in the later nineteenth century were Spanish.²²

There were other types of images in circulation in Europe that claimed to record the *misura* of the feet of venerated persons. These included imprints of Christ’s feet left on the Via Appia, when Christ met Peter fleeing the anti-Christian persecutions in Rome, preserved in the basilica of San Sebastiano fuori le Mura at Rome.²³ An engraving or woodcut with a representation of the event was recorded in the inventory of the huge print collection put together by Ferdinand Columbus before his death in 1539. Unfortunately, no impression is known to have survived, but the description in the inventory reveals that besides the visual narrative, it incorporated a measure (*mensura*) of Christ’s feet, presumably derived from those imprints.²⁴ There were also saints’ cults that utilized comparable material. One of these was the cult of Santa Rosa of Viterbo.²⁵ Pilgrims visiting her shrine at Viterbo could acquire

²¹ Vicente Carducho, *Dialogos de la pintura su defensa, origen, esencia, definicion, modos y diferencias*, ed. Francisco Calvo Serraller (Madrid, 1979), p. 350: “La Virgen nuestra Señora calzada anduvo, como lo verifica la reliquia tan venerada de una zapatilla de sus divinos pies que está en la Iglesia mayor de Burgos.”

²² A. Durand, *L’écrin de la Sainte Vierge: Souvenirs et monuments de sa vie mortelle au XIX^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Lille, 1885), 2:63ff. Durand reports (p. 114) that the cult of the Virgin’s shoe “était si populaire qu’aujourd’hui encore, à Mont-Serrat en Catalogne, les pèlerins aiment à emporter un souvenir du saint Soulier, vendu comme objet de piété: c’est un morceau de carton ayant la mesure traditionnelle de la sainte chaussure et gracieusement ornementé.”

²³ The relic of Christ’s footprints preserved in San Sebastiano fuori le Mura was noticed by Nikolaus Muffel, *Descrizione della città di Roma nel 1452*, ed. Gerhard Wiedmann (Bologna, 1999), pp. 76–77. The imprints of the feet are preserved today in the Cappella delle Reliquie.

²⁴ For the *Domine Quo Vadis* print in Ferdinand Columbus’ collection, with ‘la mensura de los pies de Nuestro Señor’, see Mark McDonald, *The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus*, 3 vols. (London, 2004), 2:355, inv. no. 1980.

²⁵ Ernesto Piacentini (“Santa Rosa da Viterbo: culto liturgico e popolare,” in *Santa Rosa: tradizione e culto, atti della giornata di studio*, ed. Silvio Cappelli [Manziana, Rome, 1999], p. 95) records that the *Misura della Mano di S. Rosa* and the *Misura di Santa Rosa* (in the form of a ribbon recording the total length of her body), as well as the measure of the foot, were distributed as devotional objects.

pieces of card or silk shaped like the sole of a shoe, which claimed to record the size of the saint's foot. In the museum of the Maison-Dieu at Tonnerre, there is a surviving example, inscribed: MISURA DEL PIEDE DI SANTA ROSA VERGINE VITERBESE (fig. 6).²⁶

There were many other devotions that developed around the 'measure' of people or objects. These include the late medieval devotions to the measure of the nails used to attach Christ to the cross, and to the measure of the body of Christ. A late fifteenth-century English prayer roll has a representation of three supposedly full-sized nails, and a Christ on the cross accompanied by a text stating that fifteen times the measure of the cross will give Christ's body height (fig. 7).²⁷ The scroll also has a representation of the wound in Christ's side. The devotion to the measure of the wound was widespread throughout Europe and many examples are known dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁸ Louis Gougaud had suspected that the devotion predated the fifteenth century, but it is only recently that evidence has come to light to show that it was certainly already current in the fourteenth century.²⁹ Representations of the great wound in Christ's side as a straight line (or simply a slit in the paper), a lozenge, or as an almond shape in red were often accompanied by promises of significant benefits, showing that it was believed to act as a charm. These benefits could be gained by various means: in some cases simply by looking at the image, or by placing it in one's dwelling or by wearing or kissing it. Accompanying some examples is a rubric claiming that the *mensura vulneris* had been

²⁶ It is attached to a paper along with a piece of cloth. The paper, dated August 1816, carries an image of the saint and a printed attestation to the fact that the cloth had been placed on Santa Rosa's uncorrupted body at Viterbo.

²⁷ For this prayer roll at Ushaw College, Durham, see Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery (London, 2000), p. 164, no. 64. See also Gustavo Uzielli, *Le misure lineari medioevali e l'effigie di Cristo* (Florence, 1899), pp. 8–10; and Curt Bühler, "Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls," *Speculum* 39 (1964), pp. 270–78.

²⁸ W. Sparrow Simpson, "On the Measure of the Wound in the Side of the Redeemer," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 30 (1874), 357–74; cited in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 244–45. See also Louis Gougaud, *Dévotions et pratiques ascétiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1925), pp. 99–102.

²⁹ L. Gougaud, "La prière dite de Charlemagne," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 20 (1924), p. 223. See also Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 304; and Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch, *Origins of European Printmaking*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art (Washington DC, 2005), p. 258, no. 78.

given an indulgence of seven years by Pope Innocent VIII.³⁰ Gougaud noted that a prayer, *Salve, plaga lateris nostri Redemptoris*, often accompanied representations of the wound and an indulgence associated with it was said to have been granted by John XXII.³¹

The *misura* of the Virgin's foot, like the *misura* of Christ's wound, could be regarded as substituting an aspect of the venerated person for the whole, a kind of metonymic sign. However, what is most interesting is that it was the *measure* of a thing—not the thing itself—that was being proposed for devotional attention. This distinguishes these devotions from those that focussed on objects such as the Veronica with its imprint of Christ's face, or the Turin Shroud. These could theoretically have been used as sources for the *misura* of Christ's face or body, in the way that Christ's footprints in San Sebastiano fuori le Mura were abstracted in the lost print recorded in the Columbus collection, noted above.³² However, this did not happen, and reproductions of the Veronica and the Shroud have a certain descriptive naturalism.³³ Although in the case of the images of the *misura* of the Virgin's foot there was some attempt to represent a physical object, in the sense that the shape of a sole was drawn, such images were usually perfunctory and highly schematic. The Arosio marble is exceptional in its modelling of the imprint of the foot.³⁴

What were normally presented as images of the *misura* of the foot can be related to certain remarkable instances in which devotional attention was called to entirely abstract forms depending on measurements. Richard Krautheimer cites the case of the three lines on the wall of a monastery at Bebenhausen, dated 1492.³⁵ Inscriptions identify them as the length, height and width of Christ's sepulchre.³⁶ Here there was

³⁰ On the *mensura vulneris*, see Douglas Gray, "The Five Wounds of our Lord, II," *Notes and Queries* 208 (1963), pp. 87–88.

³¹ Gougaud, "La prière dite de Charlemagne," p. 100.

³² See n. 24, above.

³³ Claudio Salsi and Maria Goldoni, *I legni incisi della Galleria Estense a Milano*, exhibition catalogue, Castello Sforzesco (Milan, 1988), p. 40.

³⁴ See Gray, "The Five Wounds," pp. 87–88.

³⁵ Gustaf Dalman, *Das Grab Christi in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1922), pp. 89–90. On the wall of the church of the Cistercian abbey at Bebenhausen is a line, 2.01 meters long, with the inscription: "Hec longitudo vera est Verbigene sarcophagi in quo triduum requievit microcosmus, 1492." The depth and breadth of the tomb are also given in similar linear form.

³⁶ Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to the Iconography of Medieval Architecture," in *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art* (London, 1971), p. 124.

not even an attempt at the relational mapping of a visual configuration corresponding to the object in question.

This kind of phenomenon is precisely the opposite of a representation that attempts to recreate or reproduce an original in its visible aspect or appearance. In modern discussions of developments in late medieval devotion, it is commonplace to emphasize a shift towards more affective kinds of piety and an increasing desire for a more interiorized spirituality. Franciscan texts, such as the fourteenth-century *Meditationes vitae Christi* (Meditations on the Life of Christ) are often taken as symptomatic of a change by which laymen were enabled to participate in the kinds of intimate devotional practices previously reserved for clerical and monastic use.³⁷ This line of development has been linked to and even seen in a causal relationship with late medieval devotional images that aimed at a lifelikeness that would encourage empathy.³⁸ The devotion to the *misura* of the Virgin's foot does not obviously fit with these ideas.

If we concentrate primarily on the images of the *misura* of the Virgin's foot, they can be thought about either from the point of view of their making, or of their function. From the point of view of their making, they could easily be replicated because they were not tied to any particular material form, nor did they depend upon more than the most elementary human artifice for their realisation. It is also apparent that each example is not a reproduction of something other than itself: it is what it is. However, if thought about from the point of view of the spectator, they are images in which the meaning or significance is fully concentrated (immanent). This means that there is no diffusion or deflection of interest either towards the imagining of physical presence or towards artistic skill. Periodically throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, anxieties were expressed about human artifice as an

In this study, Krautheimer discusses many examples of how measurements taken from sacred sites in the Holy Land might be incorporated in new structures. He argues that these immaterial elements were understood as echoes of the original form, capable of reminding the faithful of a venerated site and arousing devotion, thereby bestowing at least a share of the blessings obtainable from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (p. 127). A reproduction 'typica et figuraliter', he wrote, acted as a memento and as a symbol of promised salvation (p. 128).

³⁷ Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion*, exhibition catalogue, Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 12–13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 132–35.

obstacle to spiritual contemplation and devotional concentration.³⁹ If images evoked a sense of lifelike physical presence in order to engage human emotion, this could be simultaneously the condition for their success in heightening spiritual awareness and the circumstance of quite inappropriate distractions. The bodies created would potentially have a physical, sensual appeal, while the skill with which they were executed could elicit admiration for mastery. In both respects, distinctly unspiritual thoughts might be aroused. The image of the *misura*, it could be argued, avoided these problems.

The *misura* did not provoke a direct human sympathy, nor did it attempt to satisfy visual curiosity by presenting a concretely real image.⁴⁰ It could work in a different way: through its very precise yet abstract character it maintained an openness to meaning, stimulating the memories of the devout so that they recalled everything they knew about the Virgin and what she meant to them.⁴¹ It is possible that an interiorized piety might have gained particular satisfaction from the lack of any emotional triggers within the image itself, thus allowing great freedom for the individual imagination.

As has been shown, we do not know precisely why this devotion to the *misura* came to be regarded as problematic. The attempt by the Venetian authorities to suppress the print in 1610 may simply have been the consequence of what was explicitly stated at the time: that the print had been made and sold without a licence. The official Roman condemnation pronounced in 1678 may have been caused by the discovery that the claimed indulgence of John XXII was spurious. If there were deeper causes of unease about it, the evidence does not reveal them. In spite of official opposition, the tenacious existence of the *misura* demonstrates that an image with none of those qualities of naturalism and expression usually seen as necessary could function as an object of devotion.

³⁹ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, 1980), pp. 90–93. The problem also exercised Catholic writers on images in Italy: both Giovanni Andrea Gilio in his *Degli errori de' pittori* (1564) and Gabriele Paleotti in his *Discorso intorno alle immagini* (1582) identified much that was wrong with the religious images of their own time with the way prominence was given to the physical attractiveness of bodies and to demonstrations of virtuosity. For the texts of Gilio and Paleotti, see Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols. (Bari, 1961), vol. 2.

⁴⁰ Salsi and Goldoni, *I legni incisi*, p. 40.

⁴¹ For the important role of the image in the awakening of memory, see Eugène Honé, "Image and Imagination in the Medieval Culture of Prayer," in van Os, *The Art of Devotion*, pp. 157–74.

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THE LIVING IMAGE OF PITY:
MIMETIC VIOLENCE, PEACE-MAKING AND
SALVIFIC SPECTACLE IN THE FLAGELLANT
PROCESSIONS OF THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

Mitchell B. Merback

Even the wildest aberrations of religious thought still manage to bear witness to the fact that evil and the violent measures taken to combat evil are essentially the same. At times violence appears to man in its most terrifying aspect, wantonly sowing chaos and destruction; at other times it appears in the guise of peacemaker, graciously distributing the fruits of sacrifice.

~ René Girard¹

This essay revisits one of the most notorious manifestations of religious enthusiasm in the very enthusiastic Later Middle Ages, a lay revivalist movement with its own dramaturgy of redemptive action and its own living images of sanctity: the penitential processions staged by organized groups of flagellants (voluntary self-scourgers) during the two crisis-times of 1260–61 and 1348–49, respectively. Missionary in spirit, the two flagellant movements generated wide grassroots acclaim and attracted converts across the social spectrum, ordinary people who, in many places, were inspired to take up the scourge themselves. The initial movements spawned peregrinating lay brotherhoods of questionable orthodoxy, as well as more structured penitential confraternities of laymen, the latter established in cities across Europe. They also aroused fierce opposition and derision, eventually dissolving under the weight

¹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, 1977), p. 37. For assisting in the long evolution of these ideas from an experimental seminar paper (written for an experimental seminar) to the present essay, I owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Camille, Robert S. Nelson, Linda Seidel, Anne F. Harris and Michael Mackenzie. Jacqueline Jung's close reading of a penultimate draft was a welcome tonic, mixing equal doses of conviction, criticism and unwavering encouragement; along with the many bibliographic suggestions, her involvement in the project helped me make sense of it all.

of ecclesiastical censure and secular repression. Albeit short-lived, the successes and long-range impact of both movements were significant. These successes hinged, as I will argue, on the groups' willingness to instrumentalise their own bodily pain and bloodshed and put it on public display—the heart of their novel brand of ritual violence—not merely in atonement for sins, individual and collective, as is commonly claimed, but as a radical kind of magical intervention into the affairs of the world. Their ascetic activism, which outstripped by virtue of its bold theatricality all other contemporary expressions of the apostolic life (*vita apostolica*), aimed at nothing less than the redemption of a Christendom teetering on the brink of chaos—a world soon to be undone, or so it seemed, by human sin, enmity and violence, a world chastised and threatened with destruction by God himself.

In the discussion that follows I want to pursue four complementary aims. After some preliminary comments on the emergence of new models of lay sanctity and the interconnections between spectacle, visual culture and violence in the later Middle Ages, I review the origins, development, and character of the first flagellant processions in northern Italy in 1260–61. My second aim will be to trace the internationalization of the original movement and the shifting ideals that resulted from its transalpine expansion, a change that prepared the way for the more radical, second-wave movement of 1348–49. In the third component of the argument, I offer a synthetic reconstruction and analysis of the flagellant liturgy as a form of salvific spectacle, a ritual centred on christomimetic bloodshed and pain and designed to inspire empathetic identification between performers and audience. My fourth builds on this reconstruction with a theory about the interconnections between mimetic violence, audience response, collective perceptions of sacrificial substitution, and the dynamics of ritual efficacy. Although writing from the professional vantage point of an art historian, I have not made it my duty here to connect the dots between contemporary depictions of the flagellants themselves (of which many survive from a range of contexts), or related developments in Christian iconography and patronage. Rather, as a foray into interpretive historical anthropology that attends closely to questions of visibility in culture, the present study draws on insights from the study of ritual within contemporary anthropology strictly speaking, as well as what are now commonly called 'performance studies', a multidisciplinary field that spans and often melds the study of rituals both religious and secular, public and private, with other forms of symbolic action and communicative behaviour, in particular

early drama and theatre. Although I favour the model of ritual that sees performed actions as efficacious in themselves rather than as communicative—actions as symbolic vehicles for anterior (metaphysical, cosmological, mythical) meanings that must be interpreted—I see an advantage for the present case in keeping both conceptions of ritual in play.² Simply put, my sense is that hybrid rituals demand hybrid forms of analysis—and this is certainly the case here.

My overarching goal, then, is to grasp the performative logic by which the flagellants, a lay group, transformed the Christian traditions of the living saint and the ascetic pilgrim into a new type of public ritual, one in which mimetic ‘body techniques’ (Marcel Mauss’s term) became salvific by virtue of the affective responses they provoked among those who watched. In the process I will venture a number of ideas about the nature of collective emotion and ‘salvific seeing’ in the later Middle Ages. With this focus on devotional spectacle and the opportunities it provided, we are inquiring, I believe, into the emergence of a dynamic new framework for sensory experience, especially *visual* experience, one that had (as yet unstudied) repercussions across the subsequent history of the visual arts and religious theatre.

New Models of Sanctity

The combined history of the two flagellant movements coincides with a long-term process whereby penitential obligations broadly construed—caring for one’s own soul through participation in the sacraments, and caring for the souls of the departed through prayer, pilgrimage and charitable works—were increasingly transferred to the laity. This process was fueled in part from the bottom up, by a declining confidence in the intercessionary powers of a corrupt clergy, and in part from the top down, by an inflated system of indulgences. The Gregorian Reform of the late eleventh century was running its course by the end of the twelfth, no longer able to satisfy the religious idealisms it had set in

² For the development of these models, see Talal Asad, “Toward a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 55–79; for a valuable multidisciplinary introduction, keyed to the problems peculiar to late medieval religion, see Mary Suydam, “Background: An Introduction to Performance Studies,” in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler (New York, 1999), pp. 1–25.

motion. Out of this process new religious movements sprang to life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some, like the mendicant orders, were orthodox enough to be co-opted into obedience to the Roman Catholic Church, under whose banner they took up the struggle against heresy, while others earned the label 'heretical' precisely by refusing such obedience.³

Among the many changes they wrought, the religious movements of the later Middle Ages opened the door to new models of lay sanctity. Prior to the twelfth century, explains André Vauchez, faithful lay Christians were "excluded from the sphere of holiness" by virtue of their involvement in war, sex, money or all three of these, and could "accede to it only in exceptional cases."⁴ Already by 1200, however, the novel practice of venerating commoners—most of them town-dwellers, all of them pilgrims and all of them men—for their extraordinary piety and charity was well-developed; the phenomenon appears first in the urbanized regions of central and northern Italy, the same area, we will see, that gave birth to the earliest flagellant processions. And it took root among the middle class or *popolo*, the class whose interests would be most directly fostered by flagellant activity in particular cities. Building on this reevaluation of the active life as no longer intrinsically inferior to the contemplative, this new breed of *laici religiosi* would soon produce spiritual 'athletes', holy men and women pursuing sanctity beyond the confines of monastic life.⁵ At the centre of this new concep-

³ The fundamental study remains Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (1935; reprint, Notre Dame, 1995), although the author gives the flagellants no more than passing mention in the context of his discussion of late medieval heresies (pp. 218–19).

⁴ André Vauchez, "Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca, 1991), pp. 21–32, at 24; for a broader view, idem., *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame, 1993), esp. chap. 10, "Medieval Penitents."

⁵ Any other evaluation of the broader dynamics of lay piety would give pride of place to the 'religious women's movement' of the thirteenth century, first described by Grundmann (*Religious Movements*, pp. 75ff.) and the subject of intensive interest among medievalists since the mid-1980s. For my purposes here, developments in female piety are less important. While holy women like Hedwig of Silesia and Catherine of Siena did indeed employ self-flagellation like their male counterparts, the documented exclusion of women from the flagellant brotherhoods and their spectacles (discussed below) permits us to take the image of the peregrinating male penitent as the normative one for public contexts. Concerning female self-mortification operating in the public sphere, the earliest example of which I am aware is also the most incredible: Thomas

tion of holiness was an essentially mimetic mode of discipleship, one that went beyond the evangelical-apostolic ideal (typically realized in preaching) toward a conviction that “the potential saint had to imitate the meekness and poverty of Christ, even his humility and suffering, performing unhesitatingly acts considered ‘insane’ by society—even by medieval society that considered itself Christian.”⁶ As many observers of this period have confirmed, the paradigmatic figure for this epoch was St. Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226). His recasting of the ideal of Christian discipleship was driven both by a radical commitment to poverty and an ecstatic devotion to the human suffering of Christ in the Passion—a new form of worldly asceticism that made him, in the eyes of contemporaries, a living image of the Crucified, a ‘second Christ’ (*Franciscus alter christus*).⁷

Registering the long-term impact of this new model of holiness, and capturing its experiential dynamism, is a fascinating devotional double-portrait by the Master of the Lindau Lamentation, a Rhenish painter, possibly from Cologne, active in the first decades of the fifteenth century (fig. 1).⁸ Against a dark background the painter has spotlighted his figures, urging us to see his carefully choreographed scene in visionary terms. Central to this vision is an epiphanic moment in Francis’s biography, his stigmatization on Mount Alverna, a motif the painter presents in the customary manner: we see an apparitional figure, the crucified seraph described in the earliest hagiographical accounts, transmitting mystical streams of light, red like blood, to wound the saint’s members.⁹ Yet as the saint’s awe over the beauty of the seraph yields to physical transformation, as the “signs of the nails begin to appear on his hands and feet,” a striking reversal takes place: the look of loving compassion

of Cantimpré’s *Life of Christina the Astonishing*, written around 1232, with its array of deranged ascetic exploits; see *The Life of Christina the Astonishing* by Thomas de Cantimpré, trans. Margot King (Toronto, 1999).

⁶ Vauchez, “Lay People’s Sanctity,” p. 31.

⁷ According to St. Bonaventure, Francis’s official biographer, it was “tender compassion that transformed him into an image of the Crucified;” from *Legenda maior*, chap. 13, quoted and discussed in Otto G. von Simson, “*Compassio* and *Co-redemptio* in Roger van der Weyden’s Descent from the Cross,” *Art Bulletin* 35 (1953), 13.

⁸ Oil on panel, 111.5 × 68.5 cm, first quarter of the fifteenth century (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, RBA 33 069). For essential information and further bibliography on this artist, see F.G. Zehnder, ed., *Stefan Lochner Meister zu Köln: Herkunft—Werke—Wirkung*, exhibition catalogue (Cologne, 1993), pp. 228 and 230.

⁹ As in *The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano* (1228–29), in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 3 vols., ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short (New York, 1999), vol. 1, *The Saint*, 180–309, at 263–64.

that was, in the eyes of Francis's followers, the hallmark of his spiritual perfection is now given to Christ himself, who stands separate, watching over the scene and grieving. Portrayed here as the Man of Sorrows, wounded from head to toe, carrying the weapons of the Passion (*arma christi*), and posed before the column of the Flagellation, he becomes privileged witness to his disciple's passion—as if it were Francis's perfection to which he would now hope to conform. At the same time we see the lay donors, pictured kneeling in prayer at the feet of the Man of Sorrows (as real supplicants might do before a sculpted figure of the same subject).¹⁰ What they enact for our inspection is the very same compassion and gratitude that yielded the exquisite spiritual fruit of Francis's transformation into an image of Christ. What the painter has devised, then, is a closed circuit of mimetic doublings—inclusive of beholders outside the picture—performed under the banner of *conformitas christi*.

Each of the themes combined in this picture—the exaltation of penance as the highest form of Christian discipleship, the transformative potential of pain and compassion, the saint's identity as a living image of the Saviour, the mystical bond between Christ and those who suffer to expiate the sins of others, the power of vision—has broad implications for the case study presented here, and will be revisited below. That cult images of Francis were developed so soon after his death, becoming as controversial as his sainthood itself, reveals the Church's new readiness, after 1200, to risk the paradoxes and problems that accompanied any popular veneration of *living* holy men—saints 'in the making', as it were. Innovations in religious life were now to be put forth largely by ardent amateurs, laypeople determined to redefine sanctity in practical, dynamic and often spectacular terms.¹¹

¹⁰ The type of the standing Man of Sorrows leaning on the lance closely parallels sculptures of the period, the earliest of which appears to be Conrad von Einbeck's over-life-sized sandstone figure (1416) in the Church of St. Moritz in Halle. See Michael Stühr, "Symbol und Ornament in der Schmerzensmandarstellung des Conrad von Einbeck," in *Skulptur des Mittelalters: Funktion und Gestalt*, ed. Friedrich Möbius and Ernst Schubert (Weimar, 1987), pp. 243–54.

¹¹ See Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth Century Saints and their Religious Milieu* (Chicago, 1984); Aviad M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1992); and the literature cited in note 4, above. See also André Vauchez's introduction to this volume.

Visual Culture, Violence and Peace: Some Preliminary Questions

Within a generation after Francis's death and canonization, the first flagellant bands entered upon a war-torn Umbria as a new class of amateur holy men, offering spectacular penitential labours as a bold new ritual aimed at the violences afflicting the world. Singing supplicatory hymns to the Virgin, processing behind banners and crosses and scourging themselves bloody, this avant-garde of 'spiritual men' (*viri spirituales*), as contemporaries called them, led a missionary charge to realize the Franciscan dream of a universal penance in the dramatic countdown to the Last Days. Founded in 1260 in the city-republic of Perugia, part of the papal territories, the fledgling order of *disciplinati* (also called *battuti* or *flagellanti*) modelled their penitential street liturgies on the ancient practice of the supplicatory procession (*clamor publicus*), a clerically-led communal rite undertaken in times of stress, crisis or disaster, to implore divine mercy. What distinguished the thirteenth-century processions, however, was the central place given to voluntary self-scourging.¹² Violent mortification of the body, formerly confined to the monasteries as both an ascetic exercise and a form of discipline, was now performed in public, by committed laymen, for the benefit of all. In an unprecedented move, penitential pain and bloodshed was placed before the public gaze—by those who suffered it—as a powerful form of salvific spectacle. Despite its short duration, the first-wave movement has been regarded as the most influential and enduring of the popular revivals of the thirteenth century.¹³

That the Italian flagellants of 1260 and their fourteenth-century successors, whose movement, more international in scope, was sparked by the onset of the Black Death in 1348, undertook their rites to expiate

¹² Gary Dickson credits E.G. Förstemann (*Die christlichen Geißelgesellschaften* [Halle, 1828], 16–17), a source I have been unable to consult, as the first to accurately identify the novel transformation of the supplicatory procession; he also folds this insight into the Durkheimian model he favours for interpreting the phenomenon overall: "Processions of this kind both signified a community in crisis and provided a social mechanism for restoring solidarity in the face of adversity. Penitential processions at once regrouped, compacted, rallied, and exhibited a community to itself" (Gary Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260 and the Crusades," *Journal of Medieval History* 15 [1989], p. 231).

¹³ In particular by Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," where the evangelical thrust and crusade-like fervour of the 1260–61 flagellant movement compares favourably to its three immediate precursors, the so-called Children's Crusade of 1212, the Lombard "Hallelujah" of 1233, and the Shepherd's Crusade of 1251.

sins individual and collective to appease God's wrath and to avert catastrophes forms the basis of a relatively stable consensus in the scholarly literature.¹⁴ No commentator has failed to notice the christomimetic symbolism that informed every aspect of their ritual behaviour: joining the processions (typically) for thirty-three and a half days to symbolize Jesus's human life, the flagellants went barefoot, nude from the waist up, lashing themselves on the right shoulder (where Christ endured the weight of the Cross and where crusaders often bore cruciform tattoos); and so on. What has generally escaped attention are the ways in which these performative evocations of the Passion became meaningful within the framework of medieval *visual culture*. Part of my argument is that the spectacular images of redemptive pain and bloodshed produced by the *disciplinati* in their rites were understood by their audiences within the broad economy of 'life-like' and 'living' images that characterized late medieval Christian culture. Street spectacles and festival processions, with their brightly painted and adorned devotional tableaux (sometimes including live actors); religious theatre with its staged effects; narrative and cultic imagery of ever-increasing versimilitude—each of these genres, in its own way, offered images of striking naturalism, and played to what David Freedberg identified as the “felt efficacy . . . of the

¹⁴ The literature on the medieval flagellants is large and diverse, with much that is now outdated. Overviews of both movements are G. Bareille, “Flagellants,” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique: contenant l'exposé des doctrines de la théologie catholique, leurs preuves et leur histoire*, 15 vols. (Paris, 1920), 4:12–19; and F.J. Courtney, “Flagellation,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 18 vols. (New York, 1967), 5:954–55. Other works I have found useful, in roughly chronological order, are: Eugene Louis Backman, *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine*, trans. E. Classen (1952; reprint, Westport, Conn., 1977), pp. 161–70; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Fairlawn, N.J., 1957), pp. 127–47; Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c. 1250–1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), 2:485–93; G. Székely, “Le mouvement des flagellants au 14^e siècle, son caractère et ses causes,” in *Hérésies et société dans l'Europe pré-industrielle, 11^e–18^e siècles*, ed. Jacques Le Goff (Paris, 1968), pp. 229–43; Richard Kieckhefer, “Radical Tendencies in the Flagellant Movement of the mid-Fourteenth Century,” *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, n.s. 4 (1974), 157–76; and idem, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany* (Liverpool, 1979), pp. 79–82; John Henderson, “The Flagellant Movement and Flagellant Confraternities in Central Italy, 1260–1400,” *Studies in Church History* 15 (1978), 147–60; Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1982), pp. 43–58; Frantisek Graus, *Pest—Geissler—Judenmord: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 38–59; Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260;” and the impressive survey by Niklaus Largier, *Lob der Peitsche: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Erregung* (Munich, 2001), pp. 83–143. The literature on the penitential confraternities has its own bibliography (see below). See also remarks on the flagellants in André Vauchez's introduction to this volume.

exactly lifelike.”¹⁵ All of them worked, in their own contexts, to satisfy the popular craving for seeing—and visually ‘touching’—sanctity at its source. And all of them informed the embodied visual aptitudes—that is, the *visual habitus*—of the audiences for whom they were prepared. Though ephemeral and more difficult to study, live spectacles, which staged devotional imagery for a kind of simultaneous collective perception, may be the most important genre in the evolution of learned responses and visual aptitudes.

Paying attention to the visual dimensions of flagellant spectacle opens onto broader questions of how images of violence functioned within the religious culture of the later Middle Ages; these questions, however, lie beyond the scope of the present essay.¹⁶ Moving from abstractions to the specific case of the penitential spectacles, I want to ask what happened when the devotional gaze of the pious spectator sought out and ‘touched’ the body of the flagellant, a body marked by a violence made redemptive through its connection to the martyr’s will to suffer, a violence materialized in visible wounds, the eruption and flow of blood, and the gestural language of pain? What kind of sacral presence did such a body become when, in the eyes of their audiences, they were assimilated to the pathetic vision of the suffering Christ as he might have appeared in both narrative images such as the Flagellation, or the Carrying of the Cross, or in devotional icons such as the Man of Sorrows (*imago pietatis*)? Were the flagellants, like Francis, transformed into living martyrs, albeit collectively—an army of suffering saviours? And did the spectacular living ‘image of pity’ they produced leave an imprint in visual culture? Did such experiences, for example, pave the way for later innovations in the devotional Passion portrait of Christ, striking for what they appear to show: Christ wielding the instruments of his own lashing, the scourge and the birch, over his own shoulders (figs. 2 and 5)?¹⁷

¹⁵ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989), p. 157.

¹⁶ See Caroline Walker Bynum, “Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety;” and Mitchell Merback, “Reverberations of Guilt and Violence, Resonances of Peace: A Comment on Caroline Walker Bynum’s Lecture;” both in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 30 (2002), 3–36; 37–50, respectively; and Mitchell Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago, 1999). A very different approach to these issues is Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (New York, 2004).

¹⁷ Figure 2 is Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553), *Man of Sorrows with Scourge and Birch*, inner wing of an altarpiece, c. 1520 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum); and

Such questions relating spectacle and art are bound to remain superficial until we think through the relationship between the way penitents inserted themselves into the medieval economy of images, and the way their performances operated within the medieval economy of violence. In what sense the occurrence and perpetuation of various forms of violence comprised a self-regulating system in the Middle Ages—an *economy* of violence—is a matter better left to one side if we are to focus on perceptions and response. Historians as well as anthropologists and sociologists have long been aware that central to the great constellation of human responses to violence are the multifarious methods for combating it; of particular interest for the present case are the practices of peacemaking. Peacemaking behaviour among the flagellant companies had long remained an ‘undiscovered’ fact of the movement, and yet it is a feature that connects them to other revivalist models of the thirteenth-century, not least of all the Franciscans.¹⁸ Gary Dickson’s pathfinding article of 1989, “The Flagellants of 1260 and the Crusades,” represents the first serious attempt to see flagellant spectacle in this respect (though his perspective was hardly limited to this feature of the movement).¹⁹ It was Dickson’s multivalent analysis,

figure 4, discussed later in this essay, is Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), *Man of Sorrows at the Column of the Flagellation*, engraving from the *Engraved Passion*, 1509 (Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, inv. nr. 1927:55). In an article in progress I am seeking to clarify the connections between this type of the intercessionary Man of Sorrows, which in some woodcut examples is explicitly linked with the mystical visions of St. Bridget of Sweden, and the discourse of orthodox peace-making and Church reform. Enduring in its relevance for any assessment of the ‘intercessionary’ type of the Man of Sorrows is Erwin Panofsky, “‘Imago Pietatis’: Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des ‘Schmerzensmanns’ und der ‘Maria Mediatrix,’” in *Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 261–308; for more recent perspectives, see my discussion and bibliography in Mitchell B. Merback, “Fount of Mercy, City of Blood: Cultic Anti-Judaism and the Pulkau Passion Altarpiece,” *Art Bulletin* 87 (2005), 589–642.

¹⁸ Francis of Assisi distinguished himself as a communal peacemaker in the tradition of the eastern holy men of the late Roman and Byzantine worlds, whose unsurpassable virtue made them highly sought-after mediators—the quintessential ‘good patron’ who served as an advocate for the oppressed, protector of legal rights, and a pacifier of quarreling parties; see Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 45. On the late Roman and Byzantine holy man, see Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), esp. pp. 114–20; and Paul Magdalino, “The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century,” in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Sergei Hackel (London, 1981), pp. 51–66.

¹⁹ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260.” Medieval strategies of peacemaking, secular and religious, comprise a surprisingly vast subject which I cannot summarize here; the keys to the city are provided by Udo Heyn, *Peacemaking in Medieval Europe: A Historical*

in fact, at once historical and anthropological (his debt is largely to Durkheim), that first inspired me to think more experimentally about the relationship between violence and peace in flagellant ritual.

Building on this base I will argue that, alongside the supplicatory and evangelical purposes of the processions, self-scourging served as a kind of magical technique for defusing and controlling unwanted violences, social and supernatural. What made their penitential practices efficacious in this extended way, I believe, was the mimetic principle that has been studied by anthropologists since Sir James Frazer made it the centrepiece of his theory of sympathetic magic in his great work of 1890, *The Golden Bough*.²⁰ This principle, my argument goes, brought ascetic mortifications into an existential relation with the redemptive violence of the Passion—through the production of living images of Christ—and, simultaneously, into a combative relation with the polluting violences of a sinful humanity. That is, the mimetic principle underlying flagellant body techniques can be seen to work two ways, and forces us to understand those techniques as both communicative and magical behaviour—symbolic and practical action.²¹ Inspired by a prophetic conception of history, the spectacular penances of the flagellants formed the core of what may be called a magical pacification

and Bibliographical Guide (Claremont, 1997). Fundamental studies can be found in Diane Wolfthal, ed., *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages* (Brepols, 2000); and for the earlier Middle Ages, Thomas Head and Richard Landes, eds., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, 1992). A fascinating contemporary perspective is provided by R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham, 2000).

²⁰ Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, part I: The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (1911; reprint, New York, 1966), esp. 1:52–174. For early approaches to magic in the study of religion, see John Middleton, “Magic: Theories of Magic,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., 15 vols., ed. Lindsay Jones (Farmington Hills, Mich., 2005), 8:5562–69.

²¹ As I hope will be clear, this is quite different than suggesting that, for medieval penitents, self-flagellation was a magical technique *per se*. Ritual self-scourging undertaken in an orthodox Christian context did not proceed from the same motivations as, say, a spell cast by a Melanesian farmer to make yams grow larger. Instead it operated through three interrelated mediating frameworks, each with its own theological grounding: asceticism, penitentialism, and the doctrine of atonement (expiation). All are bound to the cause-and-effect principle that *a priori* asserts divine agency as the ultimate guarantor of efficacy, whereas magical techniques are generally understood by their practitioners to work *ex opere operato*. My working assumption, therefore, is that in the Christian Middle Ages a magical element *pervades* each of the three practical applications of self-flagellation (ascetic, penitential and expiatory), but in none of these applications is it reducible to magic.

movement, aimed at achieving what René Girard, in another context, described as “a radically new type of violence, truly decisive and self-contained, a form of violence that will put an end once and for all to violence itself.”²² To the extent that this paradoxical principle undergirds the main features of their rituals, it also holds the key for grasping the cultural logic of the *images* these rituals produced for Christian spectators in urban Europe.

Origins and Development of the Flagellant Movement

“Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and that lust which is idolatry,” instructed Paul in Colossians (3:5), a passage often cited to justify rigorous asceticism as a path to spiritual perfection. In early Christianity, asceticism represented a substitute death, a quasi-martyrdom for those holy men whose chances for that ultimate form of self-sacrifice were foreclosed by the official acceptance of the new faith by Rome. For the anchorites of the Egyptian and Syrian deserts, violent mortification of the flesh—undertaken in tandem with an inventive array of austerities—held the promise of exalting practitioners to the *bios angelikos*, the life of the angels.²³ Eventually monasteries became the principal byways to sanctity and the apostolic life in the early Middle Ages, since within their walls monks practiced the ‘daily martyrdom’ made possible through ascetic rigor.

Evidence of voluntary flagellation techniques, employing either the birch (flexible birch rods bound together) or the *flagellum* (a whip of leather thongs or small knotted cords), crops up piecemeal in the early history of western monasticism.²⁴ Not until the commanding example and writings of Peter Damian (c. 1007–1072), however, did self-scourging come to be widely celebrated in monastic circles.²⁵ Damian, a

²² Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 27.

²³ See Giles Constable, *Attitudes Toward Self-Inflicted Suffering in the Middle Ages*, Ninth Stephen J. Brademas Sr. Lecture (Brookline, Mass., 1982), pp. 9 and 12; more recent perspectives on Christian asceticism are found in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, eds., *Asceticism* (New York, 1995).

²⁴ Louis Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages*, trans. G.C. Bate-man (London, 1927), pp. 188–89.

²⁵ Constable, *Attitudes*, p. 15; Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices*, pp. 184–88. The most complete account of monastic asceticism centred on self-flagellation is now Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 29–56; but also see Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York, 2002), pp. 88–106.

hermit-monk and reformer known for his determined asceticism, later became abbot of the Camaldolese community of monks at Fonte Avellana (in central Italy), where he wrote the biography of Dominic Loricatus (d. 1060, named for the iron breastplate, or *lorica*, he wore next to his skin). Expressing the new desire to share in Christ's suffering through painful ascetic discipline—what historian Rachel Fulton has charted as a “movement from gratitude to mimesis”—Damian praised Loricatus for bearing the “stigmata of Jesus... on every part of his body,” making his “whole life a Good Friday crucifixion.”²⁶ And this two centuries before Francis of Assisi! Damian also attributed to Loricatus the innovation of substituting the *flagellum* for the traditional birch, elevating it as “a new kind of torment.”²⁷ Self-flagellation thus became the favoured chastisement in the hermitages of Fonte Avellana, where the practice was accompanied by recitation of the psalms.²⁸ Throughout Umbria the predilection for the technique spread, nourished by the desire to imitate Christ in the Passion. Its spiritual prestige became so irresistible in Italy, boasts Damian, that “not only men, but noble women adopted the discipline with enthusiasm as a means of paying their debts of conscience; this method of penance having until then belonged to the *arcantum* of monastic fervour.”²⁹ Once the practice and the penitential ethos were absorbed by the laity, the ground was prepared for two further, related novelties: its integration into processional rites, and its placement before the public gaze.³⁰

²⁶ Peter Damian, *Vita sancti Rodulphi et S. Dominici Loricati* (Letter 109, written to Pope Alexander II, July–August 1064), chap. 13, trans. in Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, p. 101; for the phrase, “from gratitude to mimesis,” see p. 89. Fulton attributes Damian's promotion of self-flagellation to the novel conviction that this ascetic technique, in particular, actualized “more than just an imitation of Christ as the crucified Saviour. It was an imitation of Christ as Judge... the answer bar none to the reproaches that Christ delivered on Good Friday from the Cross” (p. 91). This thesis and the rich analysis surrounding it deserve a much fuller consideration than I can give here.

²⁷ Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices*, p. 185; Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 34–36.

²⁸ Monastic penances held to a very precise arithmetic, of which the counting out of psalms was one of the most important expressions; to couple self-scourging to the rhythm of song (discussed further below) may therefore be seen as a natural outgrowth of what Bruce Holsinger calls the “musicality of pain;” see his *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford, 2001). On the importance of songs in later flagellant ritual, see esp. Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 108–11.

²⁹ Quoted in Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices*, pp. 185–86.

³⁰ An alternative interpretation sees the model for the first public spectacles of flagellation in Italy not in the monastic practices of self-mortification but in the public scourging of criminals and penitents (see Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 229, with further references). Although much of the ritual language and symbolism was

The first processions involving self-flagellation techniques took place in the wealthy city-republic of Perugia, in Umbria, in the spring of 1260. From all indications the founder and organizer of the movement was the admired communal peacemaker, Fra Raniero Fasani (d. 1281?), who left his wife and children to pursue the ascetic life. It was probably Fasani, as Gary Dickson argued, who also urged the city government of Perugia to grant official recognition to his fledgling *Movimento dei disciplinati*.³¹ As to what exactly prompted the initial outbreak of penitential enthusiasm, contemporary chroniclers prove strangely silent; historians looking for catalysts have pointed to the incidences of famine (1258) and plague (1259), as well as a threatened invasion of western Europe by the Mongols (who invaded Poland in 1259).³² Natural catastrophes, ecological upsets and barbarian incursions were seen in the Middle Ages as divine chastisements for sin, meant to return humanity to obedience. Such crises galvanized communities to action. In Italian city-states like Perugia, the ancient tradition of the supplicatory procession, a collective penitential plea for divine amnesty, developed into elaborate communal events for this purpose. That these responses were driven by eschatological excitation is beyond doubt. By 1260 the recent disasters had combined in popular perception to create a generalized anxiety about the immanence of the Last Days. A variety of endtime prophecies telling of 'spiritual men' (*viri spirituales*), missionaries who would come forth to convert all unbelievers in a time of apocalyptic persecution, calamity and tribulation, therefore went some way in encouraging the *disciplinati* to see themselves in prophetic terms. But the notion, long accepted by many scholars, that the flagellants were fired up specifically by the prophecies of the Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore, has recently been set aside in favour of a more nuanced understanding of popular eschatologies and the exigencies of Italian politics.³³

More important as a catalyst was the imperiled geopolitical situation of Perugia in 1260. Factional war between the Guelphs and Ghibellines had already devastated the country before the first processions appeared.

no doubt borrowed from public rites of penance, I am less inclined to this view, as it removes the element of missionary activism and freely-chosen communicative behaviour that was central to the movement's public image and objectives.

³¹ Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," p. 244; Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 86–88.

³² Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement," p. 149.

³³ See *ibid.*, pp. 151–52; and Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," p. 233. The millenarianism of the second-wave movement (1348–49) is another matter, and is discussed below.

Rival cities in the impending Battle at Montaperti (4 September 1260) each orchestrated their own supplicatory rites as a way of securing celestial aid in their cause. Prior to the battle, Siena, the stronghold of the Ghibellines, experienced what Dickson described as “a virtual paroxysm of communal penance,” including barefoot processions, penitential litanies, invocations to the Virgin, fasting, confessions and acts of peacemaking.³⁴ In pre-war Perugia the flagellant processions, which inspired the whole of society to take to the streets, assumed a similar set of functions. Desperate cries of “Holy Virgin take pity on us! Beg Jesus Christ to spare us!” and “Mercy, mercy! Peace, peace!”³⁵ transformed the city, and then the surrounding countryside, into a sprawling theatre of contrition. After the city’s bloody defeat, however, the rituals, in Dickson’s view, took on a different function. Mass flagellation in post-war Perugia appears to have become more a compensatory rite, a collective attempt to redeem the city’s failed military effort. Dickson makes this point in a trenchant analysis: “Penance, directed against the self, became a politicized psychomachia, an internalized version of Guelf warfare.”³⁶

Once the processions left Perugia, and thereafter on their Italian itineraries, it was peace-making that defined their missionary mandate. Ending clan animosity and foreclosing on aristocratic vendettas, securing the return of political exiles, pleading amnesty for prisoners, even arranging for the return of stolen goods—these were the key points of flagellant peace-making remarked upon by chroniclers.³⁷ *Pace* was the buzzword as the groups marched from city to city. First arriving in Bologna on 10 October, they sang hymns to God and the Virgin and urged the conversion of all sinners—that is, everyone. Members of a later group can be seen exchanging the ‘kiss of peace’ in at least one contemporary illustration, a page from a fourteenth-century copy of Giovanni Villani’s Florentine chronicle (figs. 3, 4).³⁸ Thus was the

³⁴ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 232; also Henderson, “The Flagellant Movement,” p. 149.

³⁵ Cited in Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 129.

³⁶ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 243.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

³⁸ *Cronica di Giovanni Villani*, second half of fourteenth century (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. L. V. III 296, fol. 197v); on the manuscript, see Luigi Magnani, *La Cronaca Figurata di Giovanni Villani: Ricerche sulla Miniatura Fiorentina del Trecento* (Vatican City, 1936); Dickson reproduces the detail only in “The Flagellants of 1260,” fig. 1.

appeasement of an angry God through expiatory mortifications wedded to the enlistment of celestial aid through supplicatory hymn singing and cries for peace; the reconciliation of human combatants seems therefore to have formed a corollary to—perhaps also a condition for—success in averting the looming catastrophe. Flagellant ritual located itself where human and divine forms of violence became congruent and, from the perspective of communities riven by war and chaos, frighteningly intractable.

Before tracing the 1260 movement beyond its Italian origins in the next section, we should note how the eccentric revivalist energies of the flagellants—from its inception a lay movement with clerical support—were eventually channeled into institutional structures. In the wake of the initial movement as many as 1,890 penitential confraternities were founded in Italy, and forty-two in other European countries, all of them traceable back to the Perugian impetus.³⁹ Members of these exclusively male groups undertook their penances “in memory of the Passion of Christ” (*per memoria della passione di Cristo*), a phrase that appears frequently in confraternal statutes. In a Holy Week sermon delivered to one of the groups by Giovanni Nesi, penitents were instructed to fix in their minds the pathetic vision of Christ, the *vir dolorum* of Isaiah (53:2–5), wounded from head to toe:

Behold that true life . . . who [in order] today to destroy our eternal death, sustains the most cruel death; considering that He suffered in every part [of His body] from His head to His feet. In as much as His most holy head was [wounded by] sharp thorns, the brightest eyes by a blindfold, the mellifluous mouth by the bitterest bile, the resplendent face by bloody sweat, the weak shoulders by the heaviest weight of the cross, the most sacred breast with a sharp lance, and the innocent hands and immaculate feet with pointed nails, and finally all His precious body with the sharpest of beatings.⁴⁰

Penitential confraternities were also instrumental in the development of “a new vernacular religious poetry and drama permeated by the intense feelings aroused during this social and religious crisis,” as Meyer Schapiro noted some fifty years ago.⁴¹ The objects they commissioned

³⁹ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 236; also Henderson, “The Flagellant Movement,” p. 155.

⁴⁰ Quoted in John Henderson, “Penitence and the Laity in Fifteenth-Century Florence,” in Timothy Verdon and John Henderson, eds., *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* (Syracuse, 1990), p. 242.

⁴¹ Meyer Schapiro, “On an Italian Painting of the Flagellation of Christ in the

included crucifixions and flagellations painted on processional crosses and banners such as the one carried at the head of the procession in the Villani manuscript (fig. 4). Confraternal imagery also ranged from Marian altarpieces and tabernacles, often showing the flagellants themselves as supplicants and donors, to panels depicting the Man of Sorrows, and even miniature columns of the Flagellation.⁴² In Golden Age Spain, penitential confraternities named for the True Cross (*Vera Cruz*) commissioned exquisitely lifelike sculpture from the leading artists of the day, images that became ‘living’ participants in their Holy Week processions.⁴³ Such imagery went on display in these rituals precisely to trigger the mimetic impulse among the performers, as paintings from a later period attest. Likewise do the *disciplinati* in the Villani manuscript incline their heads toward the banner emblazoned with the Flagellation as they endure cruel lashes inflicted by their very own hands.

Internationalization and Shifting Ideals from 1260 to 1349

Between 1260 and 1261, the movement that began in Umbria spread throughout central and northern Italy and then crossed the Alps into Austria and Bavaria, Hungary and Bohemia, travelling further into Silesia and Poland, and along the Rhine into Alsace. In 1261, the Lenten season in Strasbourg was heralded by the arrival of 1200 flagellants in the city; during their stay, we are told, the group won 1500 converts to their movement.⁴⁴ Elsewhere, despite meeting some resistance—Duke Henry I of Bavaria, for example, banned the processions in his lands—the movement attracted members from among the social elite: nobles, ministeriales, knights and merchants were all seen joining the ranks. The new geographical scope and the inclusion of non-Italians in the

Frick Collection,” in *Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art: Selected Papers* (New York, 1979), p. 357.

⁴² See Kathleen Giles Arthur, “Cult Objects and Artistic Patronage of the Fourteenth-Century Flagellant Confraternity of Gesù Pellegrino,” in Verdon and Henderson, *Christianity and the Renaissance*, pp. 336–60. A fascinating processional banner of around 1395–1400, painted in tempera by the Tuscan artist, Spinello Aretino (Spinello di Luca Spinelli), and now preserved in New York, depicts Mary Magdalene enthroned and holding a crucifix, venerated by members of a penitential confraternity on the obverse (?), and the Flagellation of Christ on the reverse (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. nr. 1914.13.175).

⁴³ Susan Verdi Webster, *Art and Ritual in Golden Age Spain: Sevillian Confraternities and the Processional Sculpture of Holy Week* (Princeton, 1998).

⁴⁴ Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, p. 90.

companies' ranks augured a shift in character and, eventually, in purpose. Some groups seem to have swiftly outpaced clerical controls, and the once-orthodox Italian processions slowly transformed into a lower-class movement with radical impulses. With the withdrawal of clerical support came the adoption, by the German leaders in particular, of new codes of ritual behaviour, a new mode of dress, and new songs. Preachers attached to such groups carried with them the text of a so-called "Heavenly Letter," in which God communicated his displeasure with his children, excoriating them for their ingratitude and unwillingness to keep the sabbath, condemning a corrupt and lazy priesthood, and threatening to loose terrible scourges upon the earth (bloodlettings by Saracen and heathen armies, earthquakes, famine, locusts, frosts, infestations of mice, etc.) unless atonement came quickly.⁴⁵ The anticlericalism of such apocalyptic agitprop, and the danger it posed to the sacraments, were impossible to ignore. Henceforth marginalization and suppression by authorities became additional crosses for these self-made martyrs to bear. "What was lost," explains Gary Dickson, "was that quasi-confraternal solidarity of clerics, friars, and layfolk, which had so strongly marked the Italian enthusiasm."⁴⁶ Once repression began it seems to have further radicalized the German groups; the flagellants would soon be regarded widely as a 'sect' (*secte*, the Latin equivalent for the Greek *hereses*), over which the threat of excommunication hovered.⁴⁷

In many ways, then, the fallout from the cross-Alpine transplantation of the Italian movement, with its dynamic of marginalization, repression and radicalization, presaged the more sensational—and sensationalized—episode of 1348–49. Amidst rumours of plague, but in most places prior to its onset, bands of flagellants began a pan-European

⁴⁵ In the rites of the second-wave flagellants, the reading of the Heavenly Letter ended with a genealogy of the movement, connecting it to recent events. The complete text of the letter is preserved in several sources and may date back in its essentials to a sixth-century Latin text; the version recorded in the Strasbourg chronicle by Fritsche Closener is reproduced in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 101–106; cf. Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 129–30.

⁴⁶ Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," pp. 233–34.

⁴⁷ Graus, *Pest—Geissler—Judenmorde*, pp. 38, 46–47. Clarity on the problem of how the Church defined heresy across its long history is critical for the present case; see the authoritative introduction in Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, eds. and trans., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (1969; reprint, New York, 1991), pp. 1–67.

sweep that carried the movement into four principal regions.⁴⁸ From their initial entrance into Austria in late 1348, they moved north and northwest into Thuringia, then down to Franconia in April and May of 1349. Moving south and southwest in May and June, the movement infiltrated the Upper Rhine, then, beginning in July and August of 1349, started its final trajectory into Westphalia, as well as further northward into the Low Countries, England and France, where it was turned back by the king. More often than not, local authorities erected obstacles to the flagellants' entering their cities: in April city-gates were closed against them in Lübeck and Erfurt (where it is said 3,000 penitents set up camp outside the city);⁴⁹ and they were expelled, after some initial success, from Prague and Breslau. In an image from a fifteenth-century Swiss chronicle, illustrated by Diebold Schilling, municipal authorities emerge from their city gates, hesitantly preparing to confront a determined battalion of barefoot flagellants equipped with scourges and birches and wearing cross-emblazoned helmets.⁵⁰

In conscious emulation of the crusaders of 1309, the German groups embarked on their sacred journey complete with uniforms (typically a white robe with a red cross and a similarly marked hood),⁵¹ songs (several of which have been preserved in chroniclers' accounts),⁵² ritual

⁴⁸ Kieckhefer, "Radical Tendencies," pp. 165ff; cf. Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 93–94.

⁴⁹ Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 132.

⁵⁰ Illustration from the three-volume *Bern Chronicle* of Rudolf von Erlach, fifteenth century (Bern, Stadtbibliothek, hist. helv. I.16., vol. I., fol. 336r); reproduced in E.A. Gessler and Walter Muschg, *Die Schweizer Bildchroniken des 15./16. Jahrhunderts* (Zurich, 1941), fig. 80.

⁵¹ As depicted, for example, in an image of St. Gregory's Procession from a Lombard manuscript of around 1380 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 757, fol. 155r); and a painting by Vitale da Bologna in Rome (Pinacoteca Vaticana); for both images, see Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Late XIVth Century and the Patronage of the Duke* (London, 1967), figs. 462 and 464. It should be noted that the iconographic evidence for fourteenth-century flagellant costume varies widely; just as often they are depicted wearing a variety of headgear rather than standardized hoods. Examples include an illustration from the *Constance Chronicle* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 426, fol. 42r), and Paul de Limbourg's flagellant procession from the *Belles Heures of the Duke of Berry*, c. 1405–08 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cloisters Collection, fol. 74v); both reproduced in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 87 and 128, respectively.

⁵² See Arthur Hubner, *Der deutschen Geisslerlieder: Studien zum geistlichen Volksliede des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1931), the first half of which contains a useful history of the German flagellants; Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 108–11; and Holsinger, *Music, Body and Desire*, pp. 197–98.

protocols, pseudo-monastic names like “Brethren of the Cross” and “Crossbearers,” and their own version of the Heavenly Letter.⁵³ Several observations about the masculine ideals behind this mode of self-presentation should be noted at this point. While efforts to project a crusading image certainly reflect the brotherhoods’ desire for legitimacy as an apostolic mission, they may also betray a need to protect the practice of voluntary self-flagellation, specifically that undertaken in public, as an exclusively male prerogative. We know that during the first-wave movement in Italy, women attached to the groups undertook their mortifications separate from men, in churches or in private houses.⁵⁴ Various sources for the fourteenth century, by contrast, reveal extended opportunities for participation among female followers, a change that complemented the northern movement’s oft-noted social diversity. A chronicler in Magdeburg reported on a great procession of female flagellants who scourged themselves while singing, their faces veiled and their bodies covered with mantles, with only their backs exposed to the lash. Occasionally we catch a glimpse of men and women performing together, but this is undoubtedly the rare exception.⁵⁵ As a rule, medieval women’s self-mortification was kept hidden from the public sphere. Studies of penitential confraternities from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century reveal a similar and consistent pattern: even in organizations where women were admitted as members, they were forbidden from practising public flagellation.⁵⁶ Why? Several reasons may be adduced, but the most compelling stem from deeply-rooted perceptions of the corrupt state of women’s bodies. Following Georges Duby’s reminder that the curse of *dolor* (pain) placed on Eve meant that women were, in a fallen world, already condemned to suffer, Lisa Silverman explains:

unlike the curses of *dolor* and *labor*, voluntary suffering was seen to be redemptive... Choosing to suffer became [from the twelfth century onward] a high-status activity, a mark of elite masculinity. Suffering was transformed. In this transformation, ritual flagellation helped to manifest the hierarchy of grace, in which different kinds of suffering were assigned

⁵³ The first true ‘order’ of flagellants, the so-called ‘Brotherhood of the the Flagellants’, may have originated in Hungary and then spread to Germany; see J.F.C. Hecker, *The Black Death in the Fourteenth Century*, trans. B.G. Babington (London, 1833), p. 86.

⁵⁴ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 238.

⁵⁵ Quoted and discussed in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 97–98.

⁵⁶ Various theories are discussed in Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago, 2001), pp. 126–30.

different spiritual merit: *dolor* was a debt owed to God, mortification a gift given voluntarily.... The spiritual value of pain derived from the person who suffered it because the physical nature of the person—man or woman—helped to determine the chosenness of the pain.⁵⁷

Concerns about sexual immodesty and, later, witchcraft fears—two sides of the same coin—undoubtedly also played a part in constraining women's roles in flagellant rituals. A certain Polish chronicler noted with disdain the inclusion of women and girls from local villages in one procession: with their short-cropped hair, he reports, they went about in procession, scourging themselves as if gripped by madness. Led astray by the devil, they and the whole movement were destined for hell.⁵⁸

Because the 1348–49 flagellant movement took on such different characteristics in various places, it defies simple summary. Scholarly debate turns on a number of questions that can only be touched upon here: the cause-and-effect relationships between the plague and the processions; the social composition of the groups; when and to what extent the groups began to exhibit the anticlerical or anarchic tendencies later attributed to them; the extent of their participation in urban pogroms against Jewish communities; and whether or not their brand of eschatology and millenarianism was radical or truly heretical.⁵⁹ For our purposes here, it is enough to recall how the dynamic of marginalization, radicalization and repression played itself out. By

⁵⁷ Silverman, *Tortured Subjects*, p. 129; Georges Duby's valuable discussion is "Réflexions sur la douleur physique au moyen âge," in *Mâle moyen âge: de l'amour et autres essais* (Paris, 1988), pp. 203–209.

⁵⁸ *Annales Mechovienses*, p. 670; quoted and discussed in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, p. 98.

⁵⁹ On this cluster of issues, see Kieckhefer, "Radical Tendencies;" on flagellant millenarianism, Robert E. Lerner, "The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *American Historical Review* 86 (1981), 533–52; Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 113–24, who points out that the eschatological element is most pronounced among the so-called 'crypto-flagellants' of Thuringia; on the latter phenomenon, see Siegfried Hoyer, "Die thüringische Kryptoflagellantenbewegung im 15. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte* 2 (1967), 148–74. An older view of the coincidence of processions and pogroms is Mordechai Breuer, "The 'Black Death' and Antisemitism," in *Antisemitism Through the Ages*, ed. S. Almog, trans. N.H. Reiser (Oxford, 1988), pp. 139–151, who uncritically attributes the plague pogroms in Mainz and Frankfurt to the way flagellants' appearance "inflamed passions and led to acts of religious zealotry and violence" (p. 143), this despite the scrupulous research of Alfred Haverkamp, "Die Judenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Schwarzen Todes im Gesellschaftsgefüge deutscher Städte," in *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 27–93, who finds no evidence to support the indictment of flagellants as catalysts for pogroms (p. 45).

mid-1349, secular authorities and bishops worried about flagellant activity in their territories appealed to the Sorbonne for an analysis of the doctrinal peculiarities of the movement. The report issued by Jean du Fayt, a Flemish monk with firsthand experience of the movement, prompted immediate action by Pope Clement VI, whose famous bull of 20 October 1349, *Inter sollicitudines*, condemned the movement as a sect inspired by the Devil and called for its suppression.⁶⁰ Likewise, the University of Paris issued a formal condemnation, sealing the fate of the missionary crusade. The German chronicler, Henry of Herford, openly contemptuous of the bands and unafraid to call them heretics, famously reported the final act of the flagellant drama, describing how

the flagellants ignored and scorned the sentence of excommunication pronounced against them by bishops. They took no notice of the papal order against them—until princes, nobles and the more powerful citizens started to keep them at a distance. The people of Osnabrück never let them in, although their wives and other women clamoured for them. Afterward they disappeared as suddenly as they had come, as apparitions or ghosts routed by mockery.⁶¹

And yet, estimating the extent to which the German flagellants actually held the views attributed to them is tricky. During the Middle Ages, the label of heresy was readily applied to any marginal or dissenting group the Church considered dangerous, whether or not an erroneous doctrine could be detected in what its members said or did, or what was said about them. Without doubt, the northern flagellants' most grievous sin lay in their lack of clerical supervision and the behaviour that eventually flowed from this—including an apparent usurpation of the clergy's sacramental prerogatives, expressed in their willingness to confess one another, and boldly advertised in their unauthorized adoption of monastic habits.⁶² Crucial in this regard were rumours that the flagellants and their followers believed their blood to possess salvific

⁶⁰ Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*, p. 81; Graus, *Pest—Geissler—Judenmorde*, pp. 46–7; Largier, *Lobe der Peitsche*, p. 125. For the papal mandate, which included the imputation that the flagellants incited pogroms, see Schlomo Simonsohn, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents: 492–1404* (Toronto, 1988), no. 375 (pp. 399–401).

⁶¹ Heinrich von Herford, *Chronicon de Henrici de Hervordia*, ed. A. Potthast (Göttingen, 1859), pp. 280–84; reprinted in Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester, 1994), p. 153.

⁶² Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement," p. 160; and Kieckhefer, "Radical Tendencies," who concludes that "there is no evidence that the flagellants concerned themselves with the subtleties of ecclesiology. Their challenge was not so much doctrinal as practical" (p. 164).

powers. Norman Cohn attributes to the 1349 groups the belief that “no shedding of blood could be compared with theirs save that at the Crucifixion, that their blood blended with that of Christ, that both had the same redemptive power.”⁶³ Several contemporary observers raised alarms on this very issue. According to the abbot Gilles li Muisis, writing from the Flemish city of Doornik (Tournai), Dominican preachers associated with the groups were in fact “touching upon error” when they compared the performing penitent’s blood to that of Christ.⁶⁴ The chronicler Jean le Bel likewise singled out as dangerous their belief that their blood mingled with Christ’s in the work of salvation.⁶⁵ So pervasive was the idea that the groups claimed a quasi-sacramental efficacy for their penitential labours, threatening the orthodox sacraments (especially baptism and confession), none other than Jean Gerson (1363–1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, felt compelled to target the issue in a condemnatory 1417 tract, *Contra sectam flagellantium*.⁶⁶

Whether the brotherhoods or their clerical fringe (which often included renegade or dissident priests) truly believed they were participating in a mystical confluence of salvific merit involving their blood and the blood shed by Christ on Calvary must remain a matter of conjecture; what turns out to be well-documented for the fervently anticlerical ‘crypto-flagellants’ of Thuringia, a fifteenth-century heretical sect under the guidance of the prophet Konrad Schmid—namely, that self-scourging replaced the sacrament of baptism—is in fact much harder to establish for the peregrinating brotherhoods of the preceding century.⁶⁷ What is perhaps more readily assumed, and for our purposes more important, is that the expiatory, intercessionary and magical logic of their rituals was not lost on those who watched, especially because, in times of communal stress, those who watched did so in solidarity with the flagellant mission. For those reacting to the crisis around them there was much to be gained from accepting the principle of the atoning power of flagellant blood. But on what terms was this principle accepted?

⁶³ Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Kieckhefer, “Radical Tendencies,” p. 172; cf. the assessment of R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Hammondsworth, 1970), pp. 307–309.

⁶⁵ Discussed in Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:489.

⁶⁶ Jean Gerson, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 10, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris, 1973), pp. 46–51; discussed in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 129–31.

⁶⁷ See Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 119–24; and Hoyer, “Die thüringische Krypto-flagellantenbewegung.”

For collective perceptions to register the assimilation of the flagellant's blood to Christ's, audiences for the processions need not have subscribed to a mystical theology of blood. Such perceptions, I suggest, were already integral to what anthropologists have called, since the 1920s, a 'magical worldview' and the magical conceptions surrounding blood and pain.⁶⁸ Since late antiquity, magical expectations permeated the perceptions of sanctity attached to living ascetics, particularly insofar as the saint's self-mortifying practices purified and empowered him to perform miracles. Likewise was the blood shed by martyrs—which according to Piero Camporesi had its 'genetic' source in the Holy Blood of the Redeemer—shot through with magical expectations, and revered by a miracle-hungry populace.⁶⁹ Upon this mental ground the later flagellant groups built more exorbitant claims. The revivalist theme of conversion as a 'second baptism', this one in the blood of penitential self-torture, efficacious in itself, explicitly challenged the church's hegemonic claims to sacramental ministration, veering as it did toward the literal, sacrificial dimension of medieval blood piety which in many ways bypassed the clerical protocols and controls built into the eucharistic rite.⁷⁰ Official Christianity simply could not produce ascetic virtuosos out of the ranks of men who had bought their offices and looked forward to a life of luxury and privilege. Meanwhile, in the streets, before the eyes of the public, the flagellants mortified their flesh, performed miracles, healed the sick, exorcised demons, raised the dead and conversed with the Virgin.

In what follows, as we look closer at flagellant spectacle and the role of the audience, I want to explore the notion that the assimilation of the penitent to the suffering Christ was facilitated—and authenticated—by the *intervisual analogies* produced in these rituals. Such perceptions pre-

⁶⁸ On the 'magical model' of pain, see Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 25–28. Other ramifications of the magical worldview for flagellant spectacle are discussed below.

⁶⁹ "To the blood of martyrs, their 'scarlet elixirs', to the 'sweaty drippings of a blessed blood' . . . to their 'scarlet relics', popular devotion trusted its salvation and its life—to the portentous apothecary shop that rendered needless the blood sold in spice shops . . ." (Piero Camporesi, *Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood*, trans. Robert R. Barr [New York, 1995], p. 64). See also the essays in James M. Bradburne, ed., *Blut: Kunst, Macht, Politik, Pathologie* (Munich, 2001).

⁷⁰ On this point, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages," *Church History* 71 (2002), 685–714; and Merback, "Fount of Mercy, City of Blood," pp. 616–17. On eucharistic rites and protocols, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. pp. 49–82.

pared the way for the groups' claims to salvific efficacy. Before venturing onto this terrain, however, a few words concerning my invocation of the term, 'intervisual', with its obvious debt to post-structuralism's multifarious concept of 'intertextuality' (a term coined by Julia Kristeva and subsequently used and abused by numerous others) are in order. In speaking of intervisual analogy, I am calling attention to the more or less unconscious process of transposing visual schema and motifs—the codes tracked by semioticians—from one image to another, from one visual medium to the another, *and* from one experiential context to another, in concrete moments of reception. It is in this expanded sense, which takes us out of the closed circuit of 'intertextual' referencing and into the open networks of lived experience, that I have (in another context) used the term to theorize experiential transfers between the pictorial arts and spectacle.⁷¹ Here I am developing the notion in relation to the problem of ritual efficacy. My conjectures about the intervisual opportunities provided by the flagellant performances in particular are grounded in the assumption that efficacy, the practical goal of magic and ritual, is a function not only of codes communicated through actions, but of the fact of visibility of those actions, itself the precondition for their insertion into an existing field of related images. In short, only through its bold spectacularisation could the mimetic violence of the penitents operate as an efficacious sign. Only its placement before the eyes of a sympathetic audience could assure both its merit as expiation for the sins of all, and its efficacy as a wedge against an economy of violence spiralling out of control.

Performing Pity: The Rites and their Audiences

As a lay penitential movement, the northern flagellants, both in 1261 and in 1349, found strength and credibility in conceiving themselves as a crusading order—barefoot militant pilgrims, armed with the instruments of the Passion (*arma christi*) on a sacred journey to redeem and unite Christendom. What concerns us immediately are the outer trappings of this militant peregrinating image. As already noted, the (masculine) urge to emulate the crusading orders manifested itself in the implementation of pseudo-monastic names, uniforms and ritual

⁷¹ Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*, pp. 28–32.

paraphernalia. It can also be seen, especially among the Germans, in the cultivation of a ritual routine of considered discipline and precision, governed by a rigid set of rules, restrictions and requirements.⁷² Each band was led by a ‘master’ or ‘father’, roles originally held by clerics but then increasingly by laymen who heard confession, imposed additional penances on rule-breakers and granted absolution. Each member of the group was sworn to obedience for a fixed period of thirty-three and a half days, symbolic of Christ’s years on earth. During this time, he marched with other penitents in groups numbering as high as 200–300 men. They processed from town to town and in each place put on regular performances three times a day, twice in public and once in private.⁷³ If any rules were broken, a confession was made to the master, who would often beat the transgressor, afterwards beckoning him to “Arise by the honor of pure martyrdom, and henceforth guard yourself against sin!”⁷⁴ In these and other ways, we see that the flagellants were scarcely the Dionysian rabble of modern imagination (as seen, for example, in Ingmar Bergman’s 1957 film, *The Seventh Seal*); through their outer trappings, order and self-styled discipline they earned considerable—if short-lived—popular acclaim as a genuine ‘people’s crusade’.⁷⁵

A crusading self-image was also projected, as we have already noted, through the cultivation of a precise ritual routine. Given the relative agreement among the major sources, a synthetic reconstruction can be offered here.⁷⁶ Upon entering the town, the typical group would

⁷² Each man had to provide four pence a day for his expenses and, if married, must have obtained the sanction of his wife; members were neither permitted to beg free quarters or alms, nor refuse them if offered, although the master’s permission had to be sought in advance. Five Paternosters and Ave Marias were to be said before each meal, five more of each were to be said entering the house in which one received hospitality, and five Paternosters must be said upon leaving. All members had to care for their own sick, suffer patiently all wrongs and pray for all wrongdoers. Murderers and adulterers slept separately from the others; conversation and intercourse with women, shaving, bathing, changing clothes and sleeping in beds was also prohibited (Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 133); cf. esp. the account of Hugo von Reutlingen, *Chronicon ad annum MCCCXLIX*, pp. 24–29; excerpts from the critical edition of 1900 reproduced in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 81–86.

⁷³ After leaving the mission, each member was bound by oath to scourge himself three times a day and twice at night on each anniversary of Christ’s Passion, and to maintain this devotion throughout his life (Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, p. 100).

⁷⁴ Quoted in Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 133.

⁷⁵ Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:487.

⁷⁶ For the rituals reported during the 1349 movement, see the accounts of Hugo von Reutlingen (cited in n. 72, above); the chronicle of Abbot Aegidius li Muisit of

proceed two by two, accompanied by songs and often led by standard bearers (fig. 4). Also displayed were processional crosses, relics and, in Italy, *tavoletti*, small devotional paintings equipped with handles so they could be held upright; their subjects ranged from Passion scenes and martyrdoms to the punishments of hell.⁷⁷ Making their way to the church, they would pause to venerate the Virgin and then head for the marketplace or some other suitable public space. There they stripped to the waist, removed their shoes and donned a kind of skirt. A circle was formed and divided into three orders, based on the nature of each member's previous sins. One by one, each man would fling himself upon the ground and lay motionless, face down, arms outstretched as if crucified. Those on the outer perimeter of the circle would step over the prostrate body, touching it gently with their scourges. Those guilty of weightier sins were passed instead by the master, usually a layman, who would beat them while chanting a formula of absolution. Finally, once all were laying prostrate, the group would rise and begin the scourging. Heavy leather straps tipped with sharpened iron studs scraped and tore the flesh of shoulders and back while the supplicants sang Passion hymns and extolled the glories of the Virgin. These songs might be performed in a call and response pattern involving the entire flagellant company; and some portions were sung kneeling, with hands raised toward heaven. Supplicatory calls for Mary's pity, mercy and intercession on behalf of all mortal sinners seem to have formed the emotional climax of the rites. In addition, according to some chroniclers, select verses of the hymns were accompanied by a flinging down of the body in unison, "as though [the penitents were] struck by lightning."⁷⁸ All would lie sobbing and praying for divine mercy, after which all arose once more and, with arms held aloft, began to sing anew. More flagellation followed. Toward the conclusion, a sermon would be read, including the text of the Heavenly Letter; after this, the group would

St. Martin's in Doornik (Tournai); the Strasbourg chronicle of Fritsche Cloener; and the chronicle of Matthias von Neuenberg—portions of the latter three sources are reproduced in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, pp. 94–95, 101–106 (with text of the Heavenly Letter), and p. 108, respectively. Largier also offers the most comprehensive synthetic reconstruction of the rites; see pp. 107–112.

⁷⁷ Richard Trexler, *Spiritual Power: Republican Florence under Interdict* (Leiden, 1974), pp. 130–33. *Tavoletti* were also used to comfort condemned criminals prior to their execution; see Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca, 1985), pp. 165ff.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 134.

form a double-column for the procession back to the church, where a benediction would be read.

Imagining the christomimetic logic of the rituals, we might expect to glimpse, close to their bloody conclusion, the same grotesque excesses found in post-medieval accounts of mass flagellation, the “apocalyptic, crimson catastrophes” lovingly conjured up from the archives by Piero Camporesi.⁷⁹ And yet the medieval flagellant bands, certainly the first Italian groups, seem to have operated under strict limits and controls. Gary Dickson points to a recurring phrase in the chroniclers’ accounts of how the rites came to their predetermined end: *ad effusionem sanguinis verberantes* (unto the effusion of blood).⁸⁰ At a practical level, such limits were meant to protect the health of the penitents and preserve them for the full duration of their mission; and the statutes of some penitential brotherhoods expressly caution against striking harder than is necessary to produce a flow of blood.⁸¹ What mattered, it seems, was not the ferocity of the scourging, the intensity of pain, nor the free flow of blood, but the visible, *stylized* combination of these body techniques with other gestures, sights and sounds in the overall staging of the spectacle. To the extent that the visibility of blood and wounds on the penitent’s body was important—and I maintain that it was—it was an epiphanic blood, every drop revelatory and redemptive, every drop efficacious by virtue of its visibility outside the suffering body. I shall return to this point below.

Reconstructions of audience response stand on shakier ground, in large part because of the conventionalized way medieval chroniclers, speaking from their often socially distinct vantage point, wrote about crowds and their behaviour—and also because of the way they exaggerated. The paucity of directly useful information has led historians to equally conventional descriptions of the “horror and awe, terror and revulsion, mockery and conversion” that the spectacles provoked.⁸² Despite these limitations, there is room for improving our picture. We know that local communities typically greeted the penitential bands sympathetically. In the earliest phases of the movement, when the

⁷⁹ Camporesi, *Juice of Life*, pp. 53ff.

⁸⁰ Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 238; cf. the reports for the 1260 processions in the Paduan *Anonimo di S. Justina*, quoted in Henderson, “The Flagellant Movement,” p. 150; and the chronicler quoted by Largier (*Lobe der Peitsche*, p. 89): “they groaned and wept, while they whipped themselves, until blood flowed.”

⁸¹ Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, p. 101.

⁸² Dickson, “The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 240.

flagellants enjoyed the support of the clergy, church bells were rung to announce their arrival, and whole towns would mobilize to witness the performances. Pious layfolk showed their enthusiasm with offerings of lodging and food. Expectations of miracles ran high, and so too emotions. Children were brought to them to be healed, clothes were dipped in their blood and, like Veronica's sweatcloth (*sudarium*), preserved as relics with special curative powers.⁸³ As a social rule, the popular classes accepted the flagellants more readily than elites, whose guardianship over civic order made them suspicious of the companies. But even so derisive an elite critic as Henry of Herford felt compelled to note the emotional power of these well-choreographed rituals. "A man would need a heart of stone to watch this without tears."⁸⁴ Formulaic as these words are, similar evocations of collective lamentation run through the surviving sources. During a procession in Strasbourg, the chronicler Fritsche Closener reports, "all [the spectators] rushed to the scene and all shed tears of devotion, the likes of which no one had ever before seen."⁸⁵

To this general picture the element of audience response can now be added. As a revivalist movement inspired by the call for a universal penance, the flagellants had as one of their immediate goals the *conversion* of all sinners. Spectators were, in a profound sense, not to remain spectators long, but were meant to be moved to contrition and, ideally, to take up the scourge themselves. The Franciscan chronicler, Fra Salimbene of Parma, reports that in the original Perugian context of 1260 there was considerable pressure to join the processions; and in a few places, whole populations joined the ranks of the penitents.⁸⁶ To a degree, then, the evangelical message of the movement found perfect expression and fulfillment in this dissolving of boundaries between performers and audience. Although the kind of mass communal penances that took place in central and northern Italy did not happen everywhere, and although we should take care to distinguish spontaneous eruptions of local participation within a given community from the formal entry of new penitents into the ranks of peregrinating

⁸³ Among the things flagellant blood was believed to cure were afflictions of the eye; see Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 135.

⁸⁴ *Chronicon de Henrici de Hervordia*, excerpts in Horrox, *The Black Death*, pp. 150–53; here 151.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Largier, *Lob der Peitsche*, p. 100 (my translation); cf. Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 134.

⁸⁶ Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement," pp. 150–52.

groups, we can nevertheless generalize the following pattern. Initial resistance, expressed as open incredulity or even derision, yields in the course of the flagellant liturgy to pity and the impulse toward charity, pious admiration and gratitude, devotional excitation, and, ultimately, empathetic identification with the performers. When the 1261 flagellants arrived in Genoa, the event was recorded in a city chronicle by Jacobus de Voragine (1230–98), best known for his compendium of saints' lives, the *Golden Legend*. Note the reversal of attitudes that punctuates his account:

In the year 1261, there started up and quickly spread over nearly all Italy a universal whipping (*verberacio generalis*). Great and small, nobles and commoners, laying aside their upper garments, bare to the waist (*nudi a cingulo supra*), marched in procession through villages, towns and cities, whipping themselves and invoking the glorious Virgin and the saints with angelic songs. Some of these came from Tortona to Genoa, and when they marched through the city whipping themselves, they were ridiculed as fools and mad men. But suddenly the whole city was moved by the power of God, so that small and great, nobles and commoners, day and night, proceeded from church to church, whipping themselves and singing angelic and celestial songs, and those who were chief in ridicule were later chief in self-flagellation.⁸⁷

It would be tempting to accuse Jacobus of partisanship in this account: a Dominican who later (1292) became archbishop of Genoa, he was a man revered for his efforts to reconcile Guelf and Ghibelline factions in the city. But other sources, as we have seen, corroborate the picture he draws.⁸⁸ What, then, accounts for this transformation of attitudes? What factor contributed most to the forging of a popular consensus about the legitimacy of the flagellant mission, the potential efficacy of their ritual actions, and their authenticity as the 'spiritual men' of prophecy?

If ritual is to do its work in culture, the images, symbols and visible actions which comprise its performance must find berth in the perceptual schema of its audience; these schema are organized and saturated by the foundational myths of a religion, what Victor Turner calls its "root paradigms."⁸⁹ Flagellant processions were framed first and foremost by

⁸⁷ *Cronaca di Genova*; quoted in Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," p. 240.

⁸⁸ In addition to the sources cited above, see the discussion of audience response to confraternal-processional *sculpture* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, in Webster, *Art and Ritual*, pp. 164–88.

⁸⁹ See Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978), p. 10.

an awareness that the ritual of self-scourging commemorated—and reenacted—key moments in the Passion, Christianity’s root paradigm, in particular the Flagellation, which marks the onset of Christ’s physical torture and debasement as a criminal, and the Bearing of the Cross, which exemplifies the righteous sufferer’s journey through a world mired in sin. Profoundly expressive of Christ’s humanity, these became key subjects of devotional meditation in the spiritual regimens for which this era is known. For ‘performers’ these exercises were by their very nature mimetic: just as St. Dominic (c. 1170–1221), for example, mimed the Crucifixion during private prayer, so too would the laity soon be instructed to cultivate spiritual virtues by making mimetic gestures part of their daily penitential regimens.⁹⁰ Likewise through pose, gesture and movement, did the flagellants seek a visible conformity with Christ at the Column of the Flagellation—as we see them doing in the Villani manuscript (fig. 4)—or Christ Carrying the Cross. For audiences, these efforts at christomimetic performance opened the door to an intervisual devotional experience tinged with visionary longing. Private meditative practice realized itself in a form of visionary experience some scholars have called ‘mystical witnessing’, wherein one sought to be ‘present’ in Jerusalem, there to follow Jesus—the human Jesus—in real time, through each moment of his anguish and pain, and then along the final road to death, to Calvary.⁹¹ Conversely, but in service to the same desires,

⁹⁰ On Dominic’s mimesis, see William Hood, “Saint Dominic’s Manner of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico’s Cell Frescoes at S. Marco,” *Art Bulletin* 68 (1986), 195–206. Later blockbooks designed for lay instruction in the conduct of daily penance included woodcuts depicting self-flagellation and a prayer gesture that mimes the Crowning with Thorns, all undertaken before a crucifix. The exemplar of this genre is the *Septimania Poenalis* blockbook of around 1450, with coloured woodcuts (Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. Ger. 438); complementary treatments are Fritz Oskar Schuppisser, “Schauen mit den Augen des Herzens: Zur Methodik der spätmittelalterlichen Passionsmeditationen, besonders in der Devotio Moderna und bei den Augustinianen,” in Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger, eds., *Die Passio Christi in Literatur und Kunst des Spätmittelalters*, Fortuna Vitrea: Arbeiten zur literarischen Tradition zwischen dem 13. und 16. Jahrhundert, Bd. 12, (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 169–210; and Thomas Lentz, “‘Andacht’ und ‘Gebärde’: Das religiöse Ausdrucksverhalten,” in Bernhard Jussen and Craig Koslofsky, eds., *Kulturelle Reformation: Sinnformationen im Umbruch 1400–1600* (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 29–67.

⁹¹ Key studies of this mode of devotion and its accompanying literature include Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, Okla., 1989), and the essays in Haug and Wachinger, *Die Passio Christi*. A critical edition of the central text in this tradition is *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, 1961); and the excellent overview of the genre by Thomas Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996); my own treatment can be found in *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel*, pp. 41–68. That subsequent key developments in medieval devotionalism may be connected to the “spiritual atmosphere engendered

the stage managers of mystery plays aimed to transform the familiar public spaces of social concourse in the city, in particular the marketplace and the town square, into sites of pious pilgrimage—the ‘holy places’ (*loca sancta*) of Jerusalem. Public space could thereby become a kind of living theatre of redemptive pain, where spectators were also participants, eager to place themselves in tangible proximity to holy persons and events, and to experience there something of their sacral presence.⁹² By building upon the opportunities for mystical witnessing available in devotional art and religious drama, flagellant ritual offered an intervisual experience of sacral presence to spectators. Unlike the pictorial arts, however, their rituals involved a real-time staging of Passion imagery as a focus for empathetic experience, set in a public venue; unlike the *mysteres*, it was a performance that was (mostly) free of stage-manager’s devices and artificial effects.

These divergences from art and theatre meant that, in conjunction with the physically rigorous role of the living penitent, the pious audience member had to accede to an equally demanding emotional role, that of *compassionate spectator*. Here, instead of imitating Christ, one was to identify with Mary, the Sorrowing Mother, whose spiritual anguish at the Passion late medieval authors exalted into a model of suffering as meritorious—and redemptive—as the physical pains endured by Jesus.⁹³ Popular devotional exercises urged the laity to conform to Mary’s model by seeing the Passion through her eyes, making the physical pain of the Son and the spiritual pain of the Mother into intertwined imaginative spectacles. Hymns and prayers to Mary such as the *Stabat*

by the Perugian revival” is a thesis that attracted Dickson’s eye if not his labour: “Nor should one discount,” he offers in passing, “the spiritual influence of the *disciplinati* upon the pathetic realism of the *Stabat Mater* and the *Meditationes vitae Christi*” (“The Flagellants of 1260,” p. 237).

⁹² Cf. William Egginton’s remarks in his important study, *How the World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* (Albany, 2003): “The logic of religious and secular spectacle in the Middle Ages is essentially the same, that of a performative repetition intended to invoke, conjure, or make present some event. The mode of being that generates and depends upon this relation between bodies and what they encounter carries with it a distinct experience of space and causality” (p. 36).

⁹³ See esp. von Simson, “*Compassio and Co-redemptio*”; and Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, pp. 405–28 and 444–58. It is critical to note that Mary was not only the model of compassion and thus the *co-redemptrix* of sacred history; in her dignity as the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Mercy, she was most fortuitously placed to hear the supplications of humankind and forward them in the court of heaven. On Mary’s intercessory role in medieval theology and art, see Dieter Koeplin, “Interzession: Maria und Christi vor Gottvater,” in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 2, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970), cols. 346–52.

Mater, a work originally sung during Lent and Holy Week, combined prayers for divine favour with the hope of conformity to her perfect spiritual example:

Is there one who would not weep,
 Whelm'd in miseries so deep
 Christ's dear mother to behold?
 Can the human heart refrain
 From partaking in her pain,
 In that mother's pain untold

...

O thou mother, fount of love,
 Touch my spirit from above,
 Make my heart with thine accord.
 Make me feel as thou hast felt;
 Make my soul to glow and melt
 With the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy mother, pierce me through;
 In my heart each wound renew
 Of my Saviour crucified.
 Let me share with thee his pain,
 Who for all my sins was slain,
 Who for me in torments died.⁹⁴

In urging the devotee towards a mystical fusion with the loving heart of the Mother, such works elevated compassion to the highest form of spiritual aspiration. From the mid-thirteenth century, this performative element would begin to permeate Marian imagery in poetry, music, sacred drama and the visual arts, where the Virgin might appear, for example, as the dramatic performer of her own liturgical laments, signalling through agonized gesture her singular intercessory grace.⁹⁵ From the fourteenth century onward, 'Our Lady of Pity', powerfully visualized in the hymn's visual counterpart, the *Pietà*, became one of the favoured devotional images for contemplative immersion in the convents and for Marian pilgrimage cults, especially in Germany.⁹⁶ At

⁹⁴ Trans. John Shinnors, ed., *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000–1500: A Reader* (Peterborough, Ontario, 1997), p. 121.

⁹⁵ For example, the famous standing figure of Mary on the western choir-screen at Naumburg Cathedral (c. 1250), analyzed by Jacqueline E. Jung, "The West Choir Screen of Naumburg Cathedral and the Formation of Sacred and Social Space" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002), pp. 154–66, with extensive bibliography.

⁹⁶ On the late medieval iconography of the Sorrowing Mother and the *Pietà*, see esp. Dieter Großmann, "Imago Pietatis," in *Stabat Mater: Maria unter dem Kreuz in der Kunst um*

the culminating point of the medieval tradition, Albrecht Dürer staged compassionate identification as a form of visionary communion. In the shimmering image that opens his *Engraved Passion* folio of around 1509, Mary and John, who are joined as mother and son at the Crucifixion (John 19:26–27), kneel as supplicants before the Man of Sorrows at the Column of the Flagellation, their vision aligned with the thin streams of anointing blood issuing from his side (fig. 5).

For our purposes, it is critical to note that the sentiments expressed in the *Stabat Mater* later became programmatic for flagellant ritual. Some of the 1348–49 companies even sang it during their processions, and we know that crowds sang it too during the Italian episode of 1399.⁹⁷ Thus we can speak of compassionate spectatorship as the privileged mode of response both in situations where the penitential processions did, and also those where they did not, incite elements of the populace to take up the scourge.⁹⁸ These inferences, however, immediately beg several more fundamental questions. Were audiences responding spontaneously? Was collective compassionate spectatorship a function of the free play of emotions or was it matter of circumscribed, even conventionalized, group behaviour? Victor Turner's observations about the unfolding of 'social dramas' and the suspension of everyday social structures they entail are highly suggestive here. According to Turner,

What seems to happen is that when a major public dramatic process gets under way, people, whether consciously, preconsciously, or unconsciously, take on roles which carry with them, if not precisely recorded scripts, deeply engraved tendencies to act and speak in suprapersonal or "representative" ways appropriate to the role taken, and to prepare the way for a certain climax that approximates to the nature of the climax given in a certain central myth of the death or victory of a hero or heroes... in

1400, exhibition catalogue (Salzburg, 1970), pp. 34–48; and Carol M. Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Popular Culture and Cultic Imagery in Pre-Reformation Europe," *Simiolus* 21 (1992), 5–28. For the origins of Pietà pilgrimage in Germany, see Romauld Bauerreiss, *Pie Jesu: Das Schmerzensmannbild und sein Einfluss auf die mittelalterliche Frömmigkeit* (Munich, 1931), pp. 108–116.

⁹⁷ See the account of the 1399 outbreak as recorded in the statute books of the Florentine penitential confraternity, the *Bianchi*, in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhoods*, p. 51.

⁹⁸ Furthermore, given what we know about female exclusion from the flagellant companies (as discussed above), there is good reason to believe that the division of penitential labour between performers and spectators—the bearers of physical and emotional mortifications, respectively—ran along gendered lines. While compassionate identification with the performers and spontaneous acts of contrition were possibilities open to all, the prerogative to join the peregrinating brotherhoods fell exclusively to men.

which they have been deeply indoctrinated or “socialized” or “enculturated” in the vulnerable and impressionable years of infancy, childhood and latency. . . . Another way of putting it would be that “collective representations” [tend to displace] “individual representation.”⁹⁹

Taking this insight yet further, historian Jody Enders, in her study of violence in medieval religious theatre, calls attention to the double role routinely imposed upon audiences in the public sphere of pre-industrial (and pre-cinematic) society. Rhetorico-dramatic performances, by their very structure, she argues, produced “an audience that was called upon to judge but was simultaneously being judged.”¹⁰⁰ What we might intuitively read as emotional response (individualized affective behaviour) turns out to be communicative (socially constructed coded behaviour). To the extent that urban spectators in 1260–61 and 1348–49 took on suprapersonal roles as they responded to the processions, aspiring to make their expressions of pity for the living penitents conform to the model of Mary’s compassion for her tortured Son—or the pity the Man of Sorrows himself takes on those who, like Francis, suffer martyrdom for his sake (fig. 1)—these spectators were not only watching the flagellants perform but also watching themselves being watched. Performing their public role as spectators while judging their fellows, neighbors and friends, they were aware of being likewise judged in their own performance of pity. From this we can see that the concept of a *stylization* of response opens a window onto the cognitive process by which intervisual analogies generate meanings in a way that is not merely personal, happening as it does in the absence of conscious interpretive activity. Stylized response is always already communicative behaviour, its grammar inherently social.

Given the fundamental fact that every flagellant procession represents an organized response to crisis, their restorative function as social dramas is clear enough. But what psychological function did all of this serve? How were the rituals *seen* to have a redemptive effect?

⁹⁹ Victor Turner, “Hidalgo: History as Social Drama,” in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), 123; quoted (with slight errors) and discussed in Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 163. On Turner’s theory of social dramas, see also *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, pp. 23–59. Susan Verdi Webster (*Art and Ritual*, pp. 172–73) likewise adduces “an established set of conventions with regard to appropriate or desirable response” but relies largely on the stock phrases used by observers in their *descriptions* of collective affective response.

¹⁰⁰ Enders, *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty*, p. 163.

Was there moral comfort in compassionate identification—the kind of intersubjective experience that transcends social barriers in times of shared crisis—or perhaps the feeling of satisfaction (or guilt?) in seeing the penitential pains of another offered as a ‘ransom’ for one’s own sins? How did the multiple purposes of the flagellant ritual—expiatory, supplicatory, intercessionary, salvific—interact psychologically in the course of spectacle’s unfolding?

Such questions are, I argue, inseparable from the problem of ritual efficacy. If we keep in mind three things about the magical element in ritual behaviour we can reframe these questions in medieval terms. First is the logic of non-random causality inherent in the ‘magical worldview’, a logic that formed the basis, in the words of Aron Gurevich, of “a specific mode of human behaviour which disregards natural causality and is based on the expectation of results from men’s participation in the universe. . . . An ultimate unity and a reciprocal penetration of nature and humankind, organically connected with each other and magically interactive, are taken for granted.”¹⁰¹ Second are the twin principles of sympathetic magic and their relation to pre-modern conceptions of space, first described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*: the Law of Similarity (homeopathic magic) and the Law of Contact (contagious magic), each of which betrayed a belief that “things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy . . . transmitted from one [thing] to the other by means of what we may conceive of as a kind of invisible ether.”¹⁰² As theatre historian William Egginton has argued, Frazer’s definitions reveal an intrinsic connection between the ‘mimetic instinct’ present in homeopathic magic, in which like acts upon like, and a conception of space as *substantial*, as an active medium of cause and agency. Third and related is that alternative theoretical perspective on ritual, already discussed in the introduction of this essay, that sees the efficacy of ritual not as a matter of extracting meanings from symbols but of expecting tangible results from actions.

Thus reframed, the question is deceptively simple: what *benefits* could a person or a community expect as a result of performing the role of the compassionate spectator during the flagellant rites? Were these benefits spiritual, comparable, perhaps, to those obtained by praying before the

¹⁰¹ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), p. 81.

¹⁰² Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 54, discussed (with same quote from another edition of Frazer) in Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage*, p. 37.

indulged *imago pietatis*? Or were they more tangible than we would first be inclined to notice? To answer these questions, the ritual logic by which the performative *imitation* of Christ's sacrifice, bloodshed and pain elides into a *simulation* of their efficacy must be unfolded. It occurs, I submit, at the moment when ritual action causes things to happen, when it becomes an actual intervention in the world; and it occurs at those intersections of culture where the symbolic economy of violent images flows into the real economy of violence.

Mimetic Violence, Visibility and Catharsis

Already we have seen how, when the flagellant groups began their missionary pilgrimages through a war-torn Umbria and into the cities of central and northern Italy, public self-mortification was intertwined with peace-making behaviour. This aspect of the movement is highlighted elsewhere in Jacobus de Voragine's account of the episode in Genoa, where the *disciplinati* made a dramatic impact on those caught up in factional urban violence:

Many enmities and strifes . . . were turned to peace and concord. . . . Many also who had slain men went to their enemies, gave their bared swords into their hands, offering to accept from them whatever vengeance they might wish to inflict. But these in turn would throw their swords upon the ground and cast themselves at the feet of their enemies, all the onlookers weeping with devout joy and exultation of heart. Others again would scourge themselves with knotted cords made for the purpose; some with thorns, and others with iron hooks. . . .¹⁰³

Are we witnessing more 'representative behaviour' (or reading more Dominican propaganda)? Though we should be cautious about generalizing from a single source, or extrapolating from a single episode, it is clear that the *disciplinati* were capable of setting social dramas in motion, inspiring—in some places, at least—ideals of social concord and a return to obedience to God. As we have observed, what qualified the flagellant companies to reconcile combatants and intercede with God was, on one level, the merit earned through participation in a hallowed tradition of asceticism, to wit, their spectacular recasting of the apostolic life as a collective *imitatio passionis*. But was this sufficient to win over collective perceptions to consensus about the efficacy of

¹⁰³ *Cronica di Genova*; quoted in Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260," p. 240.

their novel—and to some, shocking—rites? It will be my contention in this final section that something more was in fact needed: mimetic body techniques, grounded in sympathetic magic, and perceived as efficacious in the struggle against unwanted violence *by virtue of their visibility*. It is within the collective visual experience of mimetic violence, in other words, that we must look in order to understand how flagellant ritual achieved its aim: not just ‘symbolic’ efficacy but ‘felt’ efficacy, ritual action causing something to happen.

Medieval Christian culture was closely attuned to the fragile ambivalences in the experience of pain and violence. Just as the experience of pain in the absence of a salutary or redemptive goal—*bad* pain—brought disorientation, if not terror to the subject, so too did the experience of any violence that threatened disorder without purpose or end. Conversely, just as the subject could experience pain as something good in setting the affairs of the body or spirit in order (purifying, expiatory, redemptive), so too was there *good* violence. René Girard has contended that ritual amounts to “the regular exercise of ‘good’ violence,” a practical technique for controlling its spread and directing it into positive channels; from this it follows that cultures must develop creative ways (practical techniques, symbolic analogies) allowing for “the transformation of maleficent violence into beneficent violence.”¹⁰⁴ In this view, flagellant body techniques served as a benevolent form of violence: ritually channeled through a determined penitential activism, attacks on the flesh were aimed like living vaccines against the virus of malevolent violence.

A familiar metaphor of the period provides a clue to the logic of flagellant ritual in making this happen. Medieval writers interpreted a host of misfortunes and catastrophes visited upon humanity as heaven-sent lashes, God’s ‘scourges’, divine *flagelli*. “Many sins triumphed in that time,” proclaims a statute book written for a Florentine penitential confraternity, “for which God justly afflicted the people with His divine scourges.”¹⁰⁵ Alternately, plague and pestilence could be likened to the arrows of divine wrath—a metaphor rendered literal in plague votives from the period during and after the Black Death.¹⁰⁶ Alongside penance

¹⁰⁴ For both quotes: Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, pp. 37 and 286.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhoods*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁶ Especially relevant for the present case is the frequent coordination of this imagery with the so-called ‘double-intercession’ theme in representations of the Man of Sorrows and the Mother of Mercy sheltering supplicants and advocating a reprieve for

for the sinful, intercession before the heavenly throne was necessary to turn God from his wrath, and certain saints, notably martyrs, excelled in this task. Theologically, it was the merit earned through suffering that qualified martyrs to advocate before God on behalf of humanity, but another factor, the mimetic principle behind sacrificial substitution, was equally at work in the making of saintly intercessors. Saint Sebastian, for example, became one of the pre-eminent plague-protectors by virtue of the arrows that visibly pierce his body in the majority of hagiographical depictions of his passion. By the same logic, the flagellants could advance a special claim to halt God's scourges by wielding the *flagelli* over their own bodies. Recapitulated within the confines of a ritual action and redirected to a surrogate, the penitential lashing of the body is seen to magically neutralize the providential lashing of the world. Unpredictable supernatural violences, like their human counterparts, social strife and war, are thereby brought under control by embedding them in an economy of mimetic-magical relations, where an infection is checked by anti-bodies 'resembling' the virus itself.

Visibility serves as the primary condition for such magico-mimetic techniques because it is the essential ground both for relations of resemblance and, in medieval thinking, the privileged locus of transformative experience.¹⁰⁷ As in other medieval rites and ceremonies where pain and bloodshed were purificatory or transformative (for example, judicial ordeals and executions), pain in the flagellant ritual was revelatory: it presented observers with a reliable index of what was true, and did so by virtue of its visibility.¹⁰⁸ A biblical archetype for the magical-mimetic

humanity before the throne of God; for several examples and additional references, see Merback, "Fount of Mercy," pp. 609–14.

¹⁰⁷ Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York, 2002), pp. 133–62.

¹⁰⁸ See esp. Talal Asad, "Notes on Body Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual," *Economy and Society* 12 (1985), 287–327; Esther Cohen, "Towards a History of European Sensibility: Pain in the Later Middle Ages," *Science in Context* 8 (1995), 47–74; Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel*, pp. 150–57; and Glücklich, *Sacred Pain*, pp. 16–21, in which are distinguished two correlations between pain and truth, one punitive, the other "gnostic" or "truth-eliciting" (p. 20). Noteworthy also in this context is Silverman's analysis of seventeenth-century penitential confraternities in Toulouse, whose membership included judges whose activities "lent epistemological support to the practice of torture" as a forensic technique (*Tortured Subjects*, pp. 111–30, quote at p. 130). A similar principle is at work in some hagiography, as the fascinating case of the murder-martyrdom of Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne in 1225 shows; see Jacqueline E. Jung, "From Jericho to Jerusalem: The Violent Transformation of Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne," in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 60–82.

principle of transformation is found in the story of brazen serpent (Num. 21:4–9). When they complain of thirst and hunger in the desert, doubting their deliverance, the Israelites are punished by God, who sends ‘saraph serpents’ to afflict them. Moses, enlisted as intercessor, prays until God commands him to set up a bronze effigy of the self-same serpent, “mount it on a pole, and if anyone who has been bitten looks at it, he will recover” (Num. 21:8). Understandably, the paradox of an apparent invitation to idolatry by God himself was interpreted allegorically in Christian biblical exegesis, whereby the brazen serpent becomes a type for the Crucified Redeemer. Bishop Gerald I of Arras-Cambrai (1013–48), for example, drew upon the story precisely to demonstrate the salvific power of gazing at the image of Christ on the Cross, through which sight (*respectum*), he explains, we “are rid from our hearts of the venom of the ancient enemy.”¹⁰⁹ Numerous parallels exist in folklore and healing rites, wherein the means of healing stand in the closest possible relationship to the somatic form of the affliction.

Again, my point is that visibility—in this case the staging of bloodshed and pain, no matter how stylized—is crucial. The medieval belief in the quasi-physical relationship between the human powers of sight and the salvific potency of sacred things undergirds these mimetic transfers. Popular religious consciousness put tremendous stock in its expectations that material and spiritual benefits were obtainable when the carnal senses were employed as a means of access to the holy. Touching cult objects, images or *sacramentalia* (holy water, herbs, candles) blessed by a priest not only brought the supplicant closer to the source of their immanent power; touching galvanized pious desire, and desire was itself thought to activate the powers within sacred objects. Vision provided another, in some ways more exalted, form of contact.¹¹⁰ Seventy years ago, the German folklorist, Anton Mayer, posited a direct linkage between action and effect that depended exclusively on the mechani-

¹⁰⁹ From Gerard’s account of the anti-heresy synod convened in Arras in January 1025, *Acta synodi Atrebetensis in Manichaeos*, quoted and discussed in Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, p. 85, who calls the passage a “remarkable defense of the salvific utility of images, depending as it does upon an almost sacramental conception of the power of the gaze.”

¹¹⁰ See David C. Lindberg, “The Science of Optics,” in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. D.C. Lindberg (Chicago, 1978), pp. 338–68; Michael Camille, “Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing,” in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 197–223; and most recently, Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*. See also Andrew Brown’s chapter in this volume.

cal properties of embodied human vision; his term, *heilbringende Schau* (roughly translatable as “salvific seeing”), captures the pre-modern belief in the magical efficacy of ‘touching’ the holy thing with the rays emitted by the eyes of the beholder.¹¹¹ Mayer went so far as to deny that, for the majority, the belief in the efficaciousness of holy objects—relics, cult-images, the sacrament—lay in the opportunities they presented for spiritual ascent, with its connotations of transcendence. Rather, *seeing* itself, the real-time performance of a sensual action, produced the necessary connection for activating the object’s salvific powers. The deeper the desire for a salvific or curative effect, the more the gaze itself becomes a kind of magical force for unleashing these powers.¹¹² More recent scholarship has tended to confirm Mayer’s theory.¹¹³

While the flagellants aimed their performative pain and bloodshed, mimetically, at the things they sought to neutralize, pious spectators actualized the salvific potential of these actions in the experience of watching. That this experience was collective and, as I have already suggested, in large part conventionalized, both for performers and audience, is critical to remember. In the Middle Ages, success in religious undertakings that were both corporate and public—for example, pilgrimage processions—was often vouchsafed by a thoroughgoing communal participation.¹¹⁴ Flagellant ritual, like the varieties of religious drama centred on the Passion, invited its audiences into a particular kind of communal experience, one of shared pain, contrition and suffering, but also in a kind of shared ‘joy’ in the transformative potential of suffering. In the theatre of penitential pain, spectators were called upon to experience a kind of pleasure-in-pain that dramatists call *catharsis*. Dramatists have long known the positive uses of staged violence to produce catharsis, and ancient writers saw it as a legitimate form of

¹¹¹ Anton L. Mayer, “Die heilbringende Schau in Sitte und Kult,” in *Heilige Überlieferung: Ausschnitte aus der Geschichte des Mönchtums und des heiligen Kultes für Idefons Herwegen* (Münster, 1938), pp. 234–62. The phrase at the centre of Mayer’s work is nuanced, and may also be translated as “salvific sight.”

¹¹² Mayer, “Die heilbringende Schau,” pp. 236 and 240.

¹¹³ See Bob [R.W.] Scribner, “Popular Piety and Modes of Visual Perception in Late-Medieval and Reformation Germany,” *The Journal of Religious History* 15 (1989), 458–61; and the works cited in n. 110, above, esp. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*.

¹¹⁴ This aspect of late medieval pilgrimage is discussed in Mitchell B. Merback, “Channels of Grace: Pilgrimage Architecture, Eucharistic Imagery, and Visions of Purgatory at the Host Miracle Churches of Late Medieval Germany,” in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, ed. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (Leiden, 2005), 589–94.

pleasure, because through it the evil passions and violent emotions of the crowd are purged. In classical theory, catharsis represents the vital link between pain and pleasure, and for the producers of medieval Passion plays, as Jody Enders writes, “the joys of suffering are framed explicitly as catharsis.”¹¹⁵ At what precise point in the flagellant liturgy catharsis occurred is hard to say, but it should not be doubted that it—or something like it—structured the collective performance of pity, compassion and identification.

Pursuing the path laid out by René Girard in the epigram for this essay obliges us to take one final interpretive step as we venture a conclusion. In its original Greek usage, catharsis referred to those “mysterious benefits that accrue[d] to the community upon the death of the human *katharma* or *pharmakos* [sacrificial victims].”¹¹⁶ Sacrificial substitution becomes efficacious precisely when the community is called upon to witness the casting out of pollution, and thus its own reintegration. By channeling violence onto their own bodies, mimetically re-enacting the Passion, and presenting a living image of pity for the devotional gaze of spectators; by introjecting penitential heroism into a public setting and creating a new type of supplicatory spectacle in a time of crisis; and by casting themselves into the role of surrogate victims whose pain and bloodshed cleansed the community of pollution—in these ways, the flagellants innovated a new ritual framework for the experience of catharsis. And it is here, I believe, that we can locate the operative key to ritual efficacy. One may say that catharsis actualizes the same mimetic principle by which self-scourging becomes a homeopathic ‘cure’ for violence. While flagellant violence sets in motion the logic of sacrificial substitution, its efficaciousness requires a thoroughgoing visibility, one that will ensure that spectators, too, feel the salvific power of that violence. As the desire for identification cements intersubjective bonds between performers and audience, the impact of the penitent’s lash on flesh becomes an efficacious metaphor for the purging of the public’s emotions. And in being purged, those emotions are sanctified.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Enders, *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty*, p. 173.

¹¹⁶ Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 287.

¹¹⁷ I thank Lionel Rothkrug for sharing with me his developing concept of the ‘sanctification of emotions’ (personal communication, 8 August 2006).

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SOCIETY AND THE SACRED

In this final section, two case studies—the first situated in late medieval Flanders and the second in Anglo-Saxon England—examine how medieval beliefs and religious practices connected with the saints both informed and were informed by changes in contemporary society. During the fifteenth century, ad hoc processions displayed more saints' relics on the streets of Bruges than ever before. In "Perceptions of Relics: Civic Religion in Late Medieval Bruges," Andrew Brown argues that besides reflecting anxiety at the growing threats to order within Bruges and the Low Countries as a whole, the increase in processions may be explained by considering who initiated and controlled them. Although they had originated in an ecclesiastical context, by the fifteenth century, the civic government had begun to assume authority over processions and to control when and how relics were seen. The creation of a 'civic Christianity', noted by Gary Dickson in his work on local saints' cults in Perugia, is thus observable in Bruges. But unlike the city-states of northern Italy, the towns of the Burgundian Low Countries were increasingly dominated by princely authorities who themselves sought to exert control over relics and processions. The author explains why 'civic Christianity' in Bruges could never be entirely 'civic', and why it did not incorporate, as it did in Perugia, the newer 'enthusiasms' of mendicant devotion.

Alaric Hall reveals how the hagiography surrounding the Anglo-Saxon saint, Guthlac, provides unique opportunities for investigating the place of saints' cults in Anglo-Saxon society in "Constructing Anglo-Saxon Sanctity: Tradition, Innovation and Saint Guthlac." As one of England's first home-grown saints, Guthlac enjoyed special prominence in Anglo-Saxon culture. Besides being the subject of some of England's earliest Latin hagiography, Guthlac is the only native saint to have received hagiography in the form of Old English poetry. Moreover, while the majority of Old English poetry was closely based on Latin sources, the long poem, *Guthlac A*, was not. This study examines this unusual poem's combination of an Anglo-Saxon subject and medium with a Christian literary genre, and analyses *Guthlac A*'s portrayal of St. Guthlac as a monster-fighter in the context of other Anglo-Saxon handlings of monster-fighting, principally *Beowulf*. The author argues that *Guthlac A* can be seen to invert traditional Anglo-Saxon notions of monster-fighting in order to emphasize that Guthlac's peaceful invocations of God and the saints are superior to physical violence. As well,

the poem situates the conflict in a space whose traditional connotations are shown by other Anglo-Saxon evidence to have been of heathenism and banishment—a situation which Guthlac overcomes to redefine traditional *topoi* for a contemporary Christian society.

PERCEPTIONS OF RELICS:
CIVIC RELIGION IN LATE MEDIEVAL BRUGES

Andrew Brown

Which relics were seen in late medieval Bruges; how, when and why were they seen? These are the main questions examined in this chapter. They are prompted in part by words once written by this book's honorand: more than thirty years ago, Gary Dickson commented on the proliferation of saints' images in the later Middle Ages, which he explained in part through reference to a new orientation in Christian piety towards the importance of 'seeing'.¹ Subsequent research has continued to emphasize the significance of sight in late medieval devotion.² Contemporary commentators did assert that 'seeing' was the highest of the senses;³ it moved the mind more powerfully than hearing or reading.⁴ So highly charged was the interaction between mind and eye that things seen could influence moral development.⁵ Seeing holy images and objects, especially the Host, brought spiritual benefits, including indulgences.⁶ By the same token, however, seeing was also

¹ M. Gary Dickson, "Patterns of European Sanctity: The Cult of Saints in the Later Middle Ages" (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh University, 1975), pp. 67–68, citing as inspiration Étienne Delaruelle, "La spiritualité aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 5 (1959), pp. 59–70. For the growing importance of seeing the Eucharist specifically, see Peter Browe, *Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1967), pp. 55ff.

² See for example Hans Belting, *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages* (1981; reprint, New York, 1990), esp. pp. 80–82; and Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), pp. 101–92; which also discusses the various forms of 'seeing'. See also Mitchell Merback's chapter in this volume.

³ Late medieval commentators borrowed from earlier authorities. For Bishop Durandus's consideration of the importance of church art in his *Rationale divinarum officiorum* (1286), see the translated extract in John Shinnars, ed., *Medieval Popular Religion: A Reader* (Peterborough, 1997), pp. 21–28.

⁴ As the fifteenth-century tract, *Dives and Pauper*, put it, "often man is more steryd be syghte than be heryng or redyng" (*Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla H. Barnum, Early English Text Society 275 [London, 1976], p. 82).

⁵ For the thirteenth-century Franciscan text, *De oculo morali*, for which over 100 manuscripts survive for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350–1500* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 150–52.

⁶ For the stress on *visio* in late medieval indulgences, see A.L. Meyer, "Die

the most dangerous of the senses.⁷ A long tradition of clerical thought had warned how sight could mislead or distract from true devotion. In the later Middle Ages, heretics were inclined to brand all external images of devotion tools of the Devil's craft.⁸ But even heretics are found admitting that preaching was less appealing to crowds than the sight of holy objects.⁹ Popular devotion in the later Middle Ages, it has been said, was 'intensely visual' in character.¹⁰ Thus, emphasis in all of this scholarship on the importance of 'seeing' in late medieval piety has made questions about why, how, when and which relics were seen, well worth the asking.

On the other hand, relic cults—cults centred on the physical remains of the saints—are often attributed with a decline in importance during the later medieval period.¹¹ At the same time, images were becoming more significant as objects of devotion. New cults in the later Middle Ages were focused less often on saintly remains than on icons of saints, or on miracles surrounding the Host. In fifteenth-century Bruges, the only new local cult sprang up in 1464 around an image of Our Lady of the Snow.¹² The hordes of pilgrims who swarmed to the Bleeding Host

Heilbringende Schau in Sitte und Kult," in *Heilige Überlieferung: Festschrift für Idelfons Herwegen*, ed. Odo Cassell (Munster, 1938), esp. pp. 235–36.

⁷ Seeing was medically dangerous according to one doctor in Montpellier, who in 1349 opined that plague could be transmitted by sight (trans. Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death* [Manchester, 1994], pp. 182–84). See also Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* (Chicago, 1990), p. 108.

⁸ Margaret Aston, "Imageless Devotion: What Kind of an Ideal?" in *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630* (Cambridge, 2001), ed. Rosemary Horrox and Sarah Rees Jones (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 188–95.

⁹ On the irritated Lollard preacher, William Thorpe, whose audience in St. Chad's Shrewsbury in 1407 scurried away to another altar to see the elevation of the Host, see Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), p. 150. For another Lollard, people witnessing the priestly elevation was like the "blind going to the blind" (Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 150). On orthodox attempts to combat Lollardy by increasing visual representations of the catechism in parish churches, see Ann E. Nichols, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments 1350–1544* (Woodbridge, 1994).

¹⁰ Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda in the German Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1994), esp. p. 3.

¹¹ On the blurring between 'relic' and 'image', see Belting, *The Image and its Public*, pp. 140, 214; and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1700* (New Haven, 1992), p. 167. On the declining importance in the process of canonization of relics and the miracles they might effect, see André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (1998; reprint, Cambridge, 1997), esp. chap. 17.

¹² Andrew Brown, "Bruges and the Burgundian 'Theatre-State': Charles the Bold and Our Lady of the Snow," *History* 84 (1999), 573–89; including bibliographical references.

at Wilsnack after 1383 included citizens from Bruges.¹³ Nevertheless, in Bruges as elsewhere, relics preserved in churches or chapels remained of vital importance in religious culture.¹⁴ Their clerical guardians went to considerable trouble and expense to renovate the feretories and shrines of major relics of the town. Such later medieval renovations resulted in improved displays of the relics of St. Donatian and St. Basil in St. Donatian's church,¹⁵ and of St. Boniface and the True Cross in Our Lady Church. In 1388, the relic of the Holy Blood in the chapel of St. Basil was also given a new reliquary. Its sacred contents were made particularly visible, as the reliquary was made of crystal.¹⁶

Pressure on these clerical guardians to allow relics to be seen was increasing. In the fifteenth century, a desire to see relics—within churches, but more significantly, outside them—apparently became more urgent. Relics appeared on the streets of Bruges more than ever before, carried during ad hoc or 'general' processions (see Table 1). The ostensible purpose of these processions was to invoke heavenly intercession

¹³ When civic authorities or craft guilds in fifteenth-century Bruges imposed punitive pilgrimages on miscreants, Wilsnack was often chosen as the place of destination, somewhat displacing Compostela as the favoured place for long-distance punishment. For examples concerning the chandlers (1432), carpenters (1457), and tanners (1463), see Bruges, Rijksarchief [hereafter RAB], Blauw nummers 8127, 8185, 8205; for goldsmiths (1455 and 1462), and bowmakers (1465), see RAB, Fonds ambachten 64; Bruges, Stadsarchief [hereafter SAB], 96 (14), fols. 132r, 190v–191r. For expiatory pilgrimages in Flanders, see Étienne van Cauwenbergh, *Les pèlerinages expiatoires et judiciaires dans le droit communal de la Belgique au moyen âge* (Louvain, 1922). On Wilsnack, see Charles Zika, "Hosts, Processions and Pilgrimage in Fifteenth-Century Germany," *Past and Present* 118 (1988), 49–59.

¹⁴ On the thirteenth-century shift in relic presentation from reliquaries to monstrances, that allowed the relics to be seen more easily, see Erich Meyer, "Reliquie und Reliquiar im Mittelalter," in *Eine Gabe der Freunde für Carl Georg Heise*, ed. Carl Heise and Erich Meyer (Berlin, 1950), pp. 55ff.; and M. Andrieu, "Aux origines du culte du saint-sacrament: reliquaires et monstrances eucharistiques," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 68 (1950), 397–418.

¹⁵ References in the fabric accounts to renovation of the feretory of St. Donatian occur in 1440/1 and also in 1488–1490 when there were particularly large payments. See Bruges, Bisschopelijke archief [hereafter BAB], G3, 1440/1, fol. 13v; G7, 1488/9, fol. 19v; 1489/90, fol. 17v. For reference to these payments in the *acta capituli* of St. Donatian, see BAB, A53, fols. 153 (1465), 287r–287v (1468). On the translation of the relics of St. Basil in 1463, see BAB, A52, fol. 246v. On the new feretory of St. Boniface which included goldwork in 1471, see RAB, Kirkfabriek Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, 1217 (Rekeningen, 1464–1472), fol. 266r, and Bruges, Stadsbibliothek, Handschriften, [hereafter SBH], 437, fol. 349r. For a new tabernacle for the True Cross in 1485, see RAB, Kerkfabriek Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, 250 (*Acta capituli*), fol. 20r.

¹⁶ The dedication ceremony was presided over by the bishop of Tournai. See Jean J. Gaillard, *Recherches historiques sur la chapelle de Saint-Sang à Bruges* (Bruges, 1846), pp. 60–62, 229–31.

against the threats of discord, plague or bad weather. However, relic processions with a supplicatory or placatory purpose were hardly new. Jacobus of Voragine (c. 1260) referred to two kinds of litany in the Catholic liturgy, the Greater Litany and the Lesser Litany or Rogations, which had been instituted in the fifth and sixth centuries to elicit saintly protection against calamities such as plague or earthquake.¹⁷ Although these litanies were fixed to occur at Eastertide and Pentecost, and had thus become associated in rural regions with the protection of crops, their forms were adapted for other occasions whenever heavenly aid was required.¹⁸ In twelfth-century Bruges, we already encounter processions organized by the clergy of St. Donatian's, who in 1127 brought out their principal three relics—of St. Donatian, St. Basil and St. Maximus—to meet the cortège carrying the corpse of the murdered count, Charles the Good.¹⁹ Doubtless, such ad hoc processions with relics continued to be organized in Bruges, although they leave no trace in the sources until the fourteenth century. The first references to what is explicitly called a 'general procession' appear in the fabric accounts of St. Donatian's in the 1380s. One of them, in 1382, was ordered (fittingly) on the occasion of an earthquake.²⁰

Only in the fifteenth century did these processions apparently become more frequent.²¹ More certain is the marked increase in processions from the 1460s (see Table 1). A simple explanation for this trend is the increase in threats to stability and order: in many ways, plotting the fluctuation in the frequency of relic processions provides a kind of seismograph of the level of social anxiety experienced in Bruges.²² The deterioration in relations between the king of France and the rulers of

¹⁷ See André Vauchez, "Liturgy and Folk Culture in the *Golden Legend*," in *The Laity in the Middle Ages*, trans. Margery J. Scheider (Notre Dame, 1993), pp. 129–39.

¹⁸ For the adoption of these processional rites at a popular level, notably in the Children's Crusade and by flagellants, see Gary Dickson, "The Genesis of the Children's Crusade (1212)" and idem, "The Flagellants of 1260 and the Crusades"; both reprinted in Gary Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 41–45, 52, 231–35. On the flagellants, see also Mitchell Merback's chapter in this volume.

¹⁹ Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, ed. James B. Ross (1959; reprint, Toronto, 1982), pp. 163, 246, 299–305; for comments on processions as part of the 'peace of God' movement, see p. 46.

²⁰ BAB, G2, 1381/2, fol. 9r. For other processions in 1381 and 1382, see BAB, G2, 1375–80, fol. 55v; 1381/2, fols. 4r, 9v.

²¹ For fuller discussion of the sources for general processions and dates of their first appearances, see the *Note on sources* in Table 1 (below).

²² For parallels in Paris, see Jacques Chiffolleau, "Les processions parisiennes de 1412: Analyse d'un rituel flamboyant," *Revue historique* 114 (1990), 37–76.

Flanders from the 1460s, and the wars of the last Valois Burgundian duke, Charles the Bold, put pressure on civic resources. The disputed accession of a new Hapsburg ruler, Maximilian, after 1477 ushered in a new period of war, economic adversity and political uncertainty which in Bruges culminated in the early months of 1488 with the house-arrest of Maximilian himself.²³ During those tense months, the number of processions becomes impossible to count: on 16 January 1488 daily processions were ordered for an indefinite period.²⁴ Crisis therefore explains the increased need for processions; and the easing of tension during the 1490s helps to explain the drop in their number.

While crisis management provides an explanation as to why more relics came to be seen on city streets, there are still other questions to consider, including: who was it in Bruges who initiated and controlled these processions? If seeing a relic was such an important part of late medieval devotion, control over who saw what and when is a matter of great significance. It is of particular interest and importance that in fifteenth-century Bruges, control over relic processions became of deeper concern to civic governments.

These issues are related to another aspect of Gary Dickson's work. His demographic overview of the 115 cults of saints in Perugia shows how the civic authorities there began to incorporate certain old and new saints into a pantheon of heavenly patrons, creating a highly local and patriotic kind of Christianity.²⁵ The effort to create a 'civic religion', particularly by acquiring patron saints and by managing their public veneration, seems to be a distinctive feature of urban societies in north Italy from the late thirteenth century onwards.²⁶ Are the same features to be found in the towns of northern Europe?

²³ Wim Blockmans, "Autocratie ou polyarchie? La lutte pour le pouvoir politique en Flandre d'après des documents inédits," *Bulletin de la Commission royale d'histoire* 140 (1974), 257–368. For Bruges, see R. Wellens, "La révolte brugeoise de 1488," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis "société d'emulation" te Brugge* 102 (1965), 5–52.

²⁴ BAB, A56, fol. 149v.

²⁵ Gary Dickson, "The 115 Cults of Saints in Later Medieval and Renaissance Perugia: A Demographic Overview of a Civic Pantheon," in Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm*, pp. 6–25.

²⁶ See André Vauchez, "Patronage of Saints and Civic Religion in the Italy of the Communes," in *The Laity in the Middle Ages*, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame, Ind., 1993), pp. 153–68 (where there is a reluctance to apply the term to northern Europe); and André Vauchez, "Introduction," in *La religion civique médiévale et moderne: Chrétienté et Islam: Actes du colloque de Nanterre (21–23 juin 1993)*, ed. André Vauchez, Collection de l'École française de Rome 213 (Rome, 1995), pp. 1–12.

Similar processes were at work in Bruges. A specifically civic devotion was focused on the Holy Blood. The presence of this relic is first recorded in 1256 in the chapel of St. Basil.²⁷ By the end of the thirteenth century, the relic had been incorporated into a regular civic-wide procession held on 3 May; by 1303 at the latest it was being taken around the new city walls which had been completed in 1297. Payments for the event by the civic treasury were made from 1303 onwards. As with other circumambulatory processions, its itinerary described an enclosed space and imparted to this space a sense of sacredness. Within the town, the processional route also linked spaces. It travelled through important landmarks: the *burg* (the old heart of the city and the count of Flanders' original castle), the *markt* (the central public market space) and the *vrijdagmarkt* (another market space). It passed by the collegiate church of St. Donatian, St. Saviour's and not far from Our Lady church—the three largest churches of the town. The processors also venerated other saints: on their route, they paused to sing antiphons dedicated to St. Donatian, St. Basil and St. Boniface, whose relics were the most important ones within the two principal mother churches of Bruges (St. Donatian's and Our Lady).²⁸ During the course of the fourteenth century, the civic authorities began to spend more funds on the whole event, heightening the sense of spectacle with the addition of torches, plays or *tableaux vivants*.²⁹ The Holy Blood was therefore the focus of an emphatically civic Christianity. Whether this was a Christianity more secular than spiritual in tone is a problem beyond the scope of this study.³⁰ But we may note in passing that the Holy Blood's strong identification with civic authority is perhaps one reason why the relic

²⁷ For what follows, see Nikolaas Huyghebaert, "Iperius et la translation de la relique du Saint Sang à Bruges," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis "société d'emulation" te Brugge* 100 (1963), 110–87; Lieve Ecker, "De Heilig Bloedprocessie te Brugge in de Late Middeleeuwen (1281–1577)," (Licentiaat diss., Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, 1982); Thomas A. Boogaart II, "Evolution of a Communal Milieu: An Ethnogeography of Late Medieval Bruges, 1280–1349," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000), chap. 6; and Andrew Brown, "Ritual and State-Building: Ceremonies in Late Medieval Bruges," in *Symbolic Communication in the Late Medieval Town*, ed. Jacoba van Leeuwen (Leuven, forthcoming).

²⁸ This is apparent from a later (sixteenth-century) processional (Bruges, Archief van het Heilig Bloed [hereafter AHB], Register 15, Processionale, fols. 10r, 15r, 23r).

²⁹ For references, see Andrew Brown, "Civic Ritual: The Counts of Flanders and the City of Bruges in the Later Middle Ages," *English Historical Review* 112 (1997), pp. 283–84.

³⁰ For the potentially secularizing effect of civic control of saints, see Dickson, "115 Cults of Saints," p. 19.

never attracted large numbers of pilgrims,³¹ and why it seems to have effected so few miracles. Only three are recorded in the later Middle Ages, the first not until 1470.³²

The Holy Blood was not the only focus of civic attention: it was in the early fifteenth century that the town authorities began to take a greater interest in the movement of other relics. In 1408, for the first time, the town treasury contributed payments towards a ‘general procession’.³³ In the decades that followed, these payments steadily increased in frequency. The main relics carried were often those of St. Donatian or St. Basil,³⁴ but from the 1460s, with the increase in the number of processions, the civic authorities required a greater variety of relics as well as the sacrament to be put through their paces. In 1465, the Holy Blood relic itself was taken out for the first time on a general procession and on a day other than its annual procession day of 3 May.³⁵ More combinations of relics began to be carried during general processions, particularly those of St. Basil, St. Boniface and St. Eloi—the *drie riven* (three relic chests), as these were collectively known—which came from all three of the city’s main churches (see Table 2).

The sacred and civic nature of these events was emphasized by the conduct required of citizens during the procession. Civic ordinances enjoined prayers and attendance at mass during the event; they pro-

³¹ For the absence of Bruges in the topography of expiatory pilgrimages in Flanders, see Cauwenbergh, *Les pèleringages*, pp. 138–46.

³² The only contemporary recording of a miracle seems to be in the Bruges version of the ‘chronicle of Flanders’, when on St. Martin’s day in 1470 an apparently dead newborn child was resuscitated (SBH, 437, fols. 346r–346v). For the earliest list of miracles, we are reliant on a seventeenth-century source (AHB, Register 14, ‘Kort verhael van het dierbaer Heilig Bloed...’ [1641]). This mentions only three miracles for the fifteenth century (and records the 1470 St. Martin’s day miracle as occurring in 1407, the date repeated in Gaillard, *Recherches*, 84; and Ecker, “De Heilig Bloedprocessie,” p. 75). For the only known indulgence for veneration of the relic in the fifteenth century, which was granted by the Bishop of Armagh in 1472, see AHB, Register 14, fol. 9r. There were, however, theological objections to Holy Blood relics, which can explain why some of them did not flourish elsewhere as pilgrimage attractions (although these objections are not known to have been raised specifically in Bruges). See Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge, 2001).

³³ SAB, 216 (Stadsrekeningen), 1408/9, fols. 85v, 86r.

³⁴ The town accounts rarely specify which relics were carried on general processions, but the fabric accounts and *acta capituli* of St. Donatian show that at least seven processions between 1409 and 1453 transported the relics of St. Donatian or St. Basil.

³⁵ SBH, 436, fol. 238r; Nicolaes Despars, *Cronycke van lande ende graefsepe van Vlaenderen... van de jaeren 1405 tot 1492*, 4 vols., ed. Jean A. de Jonghe (Bruges, 1829–40), 3:568.

hibited the selling of goods, and tavern-going; they ordered those who wished to follow the procession after the chief citizens to do so without making noise. These ordinances exist only from the 1490s. They can hardly be new at this time, for they are already formulaic in character.³⁶ But perhaps the formula had been set down during the more recent past. The growing frequency of these processions from the 1460s may have prompted the framing of additional rules to ensure proper conduct.

There are other signs of change from the 1470s. Since their first appearance, civic payments towards the general procession had no doubt made possible the heightened visual and auditory effects of the event: preachers (usually friars) were paid for sermons, wine was dispensed for singers and carriers of relics, and torches were arranged for illuminating the cortège. But there are indications that during the 1470s, greater effort was made to prolong or enhance this visual impact. Local chroniclers only chose to document 'general processions' more frequently from this time onwards.³⁷ One procession ordered in July 1477 was impressive enough to merit more detailed description. With the threat of invasion from a French army, and following trouble and executions in Bruges, a procession to pray for grace against the enemies of Flanders had representatives from all the religious orders of Bruges and the main city magistrates processing next to the sacrament carried by the bishop of Tournai.³⁸ The event lasted three hours. Eight sermons were preached. So struck was the bishop by the devout behaviour of the citizens watching the procession, so many of whom had gone to confession and mass, that he offered all those who had done so an indulgence of forty days.

It is not until the 1470s that we hear of certain other requirements made of processional relics and participants. The first is a reference to relics pausing en route between churches to be displayed on special stages.³⁹ The exhibition of relics on platforms outside churches was hardly new,⁴⁰ but on city streets in Bruges there are no hints of such

³⁶ SAB, 120, Hallegeboden 1 (1490–99), fols. 30v, 54v, 59r–60v, 63v–64v (for 1490 and 1491).

³⁷ SBH, 436 mentions general processions in 1381, 1436 and 1465 (fols. 149v–150r, 182v, 238r); SBH, 437 mentions them in 1436 (fol. 288v) but only gives them more attention from 1470 (SBH, 437, fols. 336v, 346r, 348r, 349r, 349v, 350r–v and passim).

³⁸ SBH, 437, fol. 393r.

³⁹ *Het boeck van al 't gene datter geschiet is binnen Brugge sient Jaer 1477, 14 Februarii, tot 1491*, ed. Charles L. Carton (Ghent, 1859), p. 15 and passim.

⁴⁰ For the increasing tendency to display relics on stages from the thirteenth century,

displays—with burning torches and participants, and spectators kneeling in silence and listening to antiphons being sung—until the late 1470s.⁴¹ We may also note the civic context of the stage's setting: it was invariably placed in the central market space before the *Halle* (the main municipal chambers), underneath the image of Our Lady placed in a niche on the tower.

Another feature of these processions is the participation of individual penitents, barefoot, bareheaded, dressed in just a shirt and carrying a candle.⁴² Requiring sinners to take part in processions as a form of penance was hardly innovative, but evidence for the regular insertion of sinners into general processions in Bruges does not occur until the 1460s. It seems as though this form of punishment was particularly reserved for those who had disturbed civic peace by deed or word: the procession in July 1477 took place after the execution of trouble-makers and the punishment of one miscreant who had spoken “bad words” about the people of Bruges and Ghent—for which his tongue had been extracted with a sharp instrument.⁴³ By the 1490s and probably earlier, ‘bad words’ included utterance of blasphemy.⁴⁴ The enforcement of a civic Christianity had come to include the construction of a civic morality.⁴⁵

see Belting, *Image and its Public*, p. 82.

⁴¹ St. Donatian's *acta capituli* refer to a ‘stacio’ for relics in 1437, but inside the nave of the church (BAB, A50, fol. 244v).

⁴² For the earliest examples I have found, see BAB, A53, fol. 177r (1466); and SBH, 437, fol. 293r (1477). One anonymous chronicle mentions processions with penitents taking place on several occasions in the late 1470s and 1480s: *Het boeck*, pp. 12, 13 (1479), 21, 23, 25 (1480), and passim.

⁴³ SBH, 437, fol. 392r.

⁴⁴ The first known case appears in 1485 (*Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis Neerlandicae*, 5 vols., ed. Paul Fredericq [Ghent, 1889–1906], 3:141–3; 278, 280–92, and 288–89 for cases in the 1490s). The evidence for local court cases in Bruges is patchy. The earliest case I have found is from 1491 (SAB, 157, Civiele Sententiën Vierschaar, fols. 36r, 36v, 39v). There are no such cases in earlier records of this court, but these only survive for the 1430s, 1447–1453, the 1470s and 1487–1488, and so are not conclusive. Civic governments, certainly in Italy, are known to have taken a stand against blasphemy from the thirteenth century, though this stance is stronger later. For a recent discussion of the connections between the enforcement of blasphemy laws and wider social concerns, see Elizabeth Horodowich, “Civic Identity and the Control of Blasphemy in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” *Past and Present* 181 (2003), 3–33.

⁴⁵ On the tightening of a ‘new morality’ by the 1490s in Bruges, see the evidence for legislation on prostitution and the prosecution of sodomy in Bruges: Guy Dupond, *Maagdenverleidsters, hoeren en speculanten: Prostitutie in Brugge tijdens de Bourgondische periode (1385–1515)*, Vlaamse Historische Studies, Genootschap voor Geschiedenis “Société d’Emulation” te Brugge 10 (Bruges, 1996), esp. pp. 70–79; and Marc Boone, “State

Thus, civic control of the sacred in fifteenth-century Bruges parallels that in northern Italy. But cities of the Low Countries were different in one crucial respect: unlike many in northern Italy, they never became city-states. Princely authority always loomed large. Historiography of the Low Countries has traditionally emphasized the valiant but vain struggle of citizens against the extension of state power, particularly under the Burgundian and Hapsburg rulers.⁴⁶ Rulers did indeed make concerted efforts to harness the sacred resources of their cities. Occasionally their efforts forcibly dragooned local relics into celebrations of ducal power: for example, Charles the Bold's votive offering to Liège cathedral, intended as thanks for his victory over the sacked city, included an image of himself holding a reliquary containing the city's own relics of St. Lambert.⁴⁷ However, ducal encounters with local relics were not usually characterized by such physical appropriation; more often they were limited to visual contact. The almoners' accounts of the last two Valois dukes record frequent offerings made by the dukes to 'see the relics' of churches they visited. The accounts during Philip the Good's rule record offerings to the relics of around twelve churches a year, at least until 1460.⁴⁸ On 11 May 1463, Philip attended the lavish translation ceremony of the relics of St. Basil within St. Donatian's church, witnessed by a small army of clergy, nobles and important citizens of Bruges.⁴⁹

Charles the Bold was a much more vigorous visitor of saintly remains than his father. Charles is noted for his efforts to develop princely power in all kinds of ways, and at inaugural entries into his towns made during

Power and Illicit Sexuality: The Persecution of Sodomy in Late Medieval Bruges," *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996), 135–53 (who emphasises this persecution more as a part of growing state power from the 1450s).

⁴⁶ For a recent overview, see Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries Under Burgundian Rule, 1369–1530* (Philadelphia, 1999).

⁴⁷ For this interpretation, see Hugo van der Velden, *The Donor's Image: Gerard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold* (Turnhout, 2000).

⁴⁸ These figures are taken from the general receivers' accounts between 1430 and 1459. There were high points in the early 1430s (22 in 1433) which can be associated with Philip's visits to Dutch towns and his efforts to establish the new Valois Burgundian presence in the region. In the 1460s, when perhaps old age and illness made travel more difficult, his offerings to relics seems to decline (ADN, B1998, B2000, B2002, B2004, B2008, B2012, B2017, B2020, B2026, B2030, B2034, B2040, B2045, B2048, B2051, B2054, B2061). It is not always clear, however, whether the duke himself always saw the relics, and it may be that he saw relics in the many other churches which he also visited and to which offerings are recorded.

⁴⁹ BAB, A52, fol. 246v.

the first two years of his rule he made a particular point of establishing contact with relics within them. In 1470, he managed to see the relics of fifty churches, an average of almost one church per week.⁵⁰ His visits to Bruges between 1468 and 1470 evidently kept the city's clergy busy hauling out their relics for his personal inspection. At least nine churches in Bruges—several more than once—were given offerings to their relics by Charles's almoner.⁵¹

Even before Philip and Charles, the Valois dukes had been concerned not only to see relics but also set them in motion. The initiative which propelled more relics out onto city streets was not just civic. The very first general procession subsidized by civic funds in 1408 was made specifically in support of the duke against his enemies in Liège.⁵² One of the essential purposes of general processions, according to the *acta capituli* of St. Donatian, besides prayers for peace or prosperity, was the “welfare of the prince”.⁵³ During the fifteenth century the dukes took increasing advantage of this purpose. Many civic requests for processions addressed to the clergy of St. Donatian may have been at princely behest.⁵⁴ Charles the Bold was more demanding of relics than his predecessors. It was on the occasion of Charles's victory at Montlhéry against a French army in 1465 that the Holy Blood was first used in a general procession. Relics were required to be even more

⁵⁰ Charles made seventeen offerings to relics in 1468 and forty-two in 1469. There is no way of knowing whether he kept up this pace after 1470: survival of his financial accounts is unfortunately very patchy after this date. For these figures, see almoners' accounts in ADN, B2068, and Brussels, Archives Générales du Royaume [hereafter AGR] CC 1924, CC1925. These are now transcribed in *Comptes de l'argentier de Charles le Téméraire, Duc de Bourgogne*, 2 vols., ed. Anke Greve, Emilie Lebailly, and Werner Paravicini, *Receuil de historiens de la France: Documents financiers et administratifs*, vol. 10 (Paris, 2001).

⁵¹ From ADN B2068, AGR, CC 1924 and CC 1925.

⁵² SAB, 216, 1408/9, fol. 85v. The same is also true of the next two payments for general processions, which involved support for John the Fearless's activities in Paris (SAB, 1411/12, fols. 92v, 97v; 1413/14, fols. 86r, 90r).

⁵³ For reference in 1422 in the *acta capituli* to “processiones generales pro aere pro pace pro principis”, see BAB, A50, fol. 125v.

⁵⁴ The *acta capituli* usually record that the request for a procession came from the civic authorities, but in the absence of ‘minutes’ for town council meetings in Bruges, it is not possible to verify that the original initiative came from the prince. Evidence for princely initiative is only occasional, but may have been more frequent than extant documents suggest. In 1475, Charles the Bold did order general processions throughout his territories (Louis Gilliodts-van Severen, *Inventaire des archives de la ville de Bruges*, 9 vols. [Bruges, 1871–5], 6:108); and on 12 July 1474, the St. Donatian's *acta* record additionally that the ‘scabini’ of Bruges had received letters from the duke of Burgundy asking for three general processions to be held on successive days (BAB, A54, fol. 45r).

energetic under Charles's Hapsburg successor. Not only was the Holy Blood marched around the town more than ever before, but also on two occasions Maximilian positioned himself within the main cortège next to the relic.⁵⁵

The authority that princes could exert over the relics of their cities meant that 'civic religion' in the Low Countries could never be purely 'civic'. In any case, many of the relics in Bruges had princely connections. Those of St. Donatian and St. Basil had been brought to the city by former counts of Flanders. The record of the translation ceremony of St. Basil's relics that Philip the Good witnessed in 1463 recalled that these had been the gift of Count Philip of Alsace in 1186.⁵⁶ Even the Holy Blood relic was believed to have been similarly gifted: a fourteenth-century tradition claimed that Count Thierry of Alsace had given it to the city after returning from the Second Crusade.⁵⁷ Like the counts of Flanders, the dukes of Burgundy might have had good reason for regarding the relics of Bruges as sacred objects at their disposal.

But on another level, these relics were not theirs at all. They were not even 'civic'. They had been given to churches in Bruges: the relics of St. Donatian and St. Basil belonged to the clergy of St. Donatian. How they were displayed was a matter over which their clerical guardians took particular care. One statute laid down in 1296 by St. Donatian's clergy insisted that the feretory containing the body of their patron saint was to be transported on his feast day (14 October) by at least four junior canons.⁵⁸ During the fifteenth century, the peregrinations of St. Donatian's remains demanded a larger number of attendants than those of other relics belonging to the church.⁵⁹ St. Donatian's

⁵⁵ In 1477 (SBH, 437, fol. 398v) and 1486 (*Het boeck*, pp. 131–32). Princely pressure on relics may also be illustrated by the processional routes taken, on which see Brown, "Ritual and State-Building."

⁵⁶ BAB, A52, fol. 246v.

⁵⁷ Huyghebaert, "Iperius," pp. 110–87.

⁵⁸ BAB, A130, fol. 124r (1296). BAB, A130 is a copy of an early cartulary, the original being at Hamburg. For rules on four canons and four vicars carrying St. Donatian on his feast day in 1374, see BAB, A48, fol. 51v.

⁵⁹ For St. Donatian's relics being carried by four canons and St. Basil's by two (by 1381), see BAB, G2, 1381/2, fols. 9v, 10r. The fabric accounts later record payments for six or eight boys—the same number merited by the sacrament—carrying candles in general processions before the relics of St. Donatian, as opposed to four before those of St. Basil, St. Eleutherius, and St. Maximus; and two before the relic of St. John's head. For the earliest examples of each: BAB: G2, 1381/2, fol. 10r (St. Basil) and 1382/3, fol. 6r (St. Donatian and St. Basil) although these early examples may be for

relics had their own special *via sacra*, followed on both feast days and general processions, which was quite different from the trajectory of the annual Holy Blood procession.⁶⁰ The clergy of St. Donatian also regarded the organizing of general processions as their prerogative. In 1463 they can be found insisting that civic or princely requests for use of their relics were to be made through them, and not through any other clerical body in the city.⁶¹

The dominance that the clergy asserted over these processions led to clashes with the civic authorities. As the number of requests for general processions rose, so did the protests. In the 1460s and 1470s, the clergy on occasion refused to allow the body of St. Donatian to be carried with relics from other churches in the city, or even to allow it to be carried at all.⁶² In the 1480s, disputes reached new levels of acrimony.⁶³ In May 1485, following yet another request for parading the body of St. Donatian, the clergy informed the city magistrates that great harm had been done to the church's patron saint, that his body was on no account to be processed at the same time as relics from other churches, and only on occasions of 'greatest necessity' and with a veneration worthy of his ancient status. When asked by the magistrates in the following year for the feretory to be displayed continually for eight successive days of processions, the clergy flatly refused.

So the construction of civic religion in Bruges, in which display of relics during processions played an important part, was a contentious process. In contrast with the major towns of northern Italy, towns in the Low Countries found their sacred events increasingly influenced

the annual Rogation procession; G2, 1409/10, fol. 8r, and G5, 1463/4, fol. 16v (St. Donatian); G5, 1472/3, fol. 12v (St. Eleutherius); G6, 1475/6, fol. 15r (St. Basil); G6, 1478/9, fols. 16v–17r (sacrament); G6, 1481/2, fol. 17r (St. Maximus); G6, 1484/5, fol. 16r (St. John).

⁶⁰ While the Holy Blood relic in its annual procession on 3 May emerged out of the chapel of St. Basil to travel westwards down the Steenstraat towards the Boeverie gate, the feretory of St. Donatian departed out of the church to head eastwards down the Hoogstraat, turning right by the Franciscan church, to return to the burg up Wollestraat and the Grote Markt (see *Het boeck*, p. 33).

⁶¹ The claim was made in a case over the rights of burial pertaining to the church (BAB, I13).

⁶² For the beginnings of complaints, see BAB: A53, fols. 132v (1465), 231v (1467), 275v, 287r (1468); A54, fol. 48r (1473). For further comment on this and what follows see Brown, "Ritual and State-Building."

⁶³ For examples in the 1480s, see BAB: A55, fols. 212r (May 1483); A56, fols. 46r (August 1484), 71v–72r (May 1485), 73r (May 1485), 95r (February 1486).

by princely authority. But to focus solely on the struggle for power between prince and city in the later Middle Ages is to ignore other forces at work, forces that continued to exert strong influences over the sacred within places like Bruges. The body of St. Donatian was being brought into the civic pantheon of saints but not without considerable dragging of saintly heels. Civic authorities did not have a free hand in deciding which relics were displayed. The clergy of St. Donatian, who after all formed one of the most powerful collegiate bodies in the region, attempted to keep a strong grip on the general procession. Their relics were the ones most often displayed: between 1470 and 1500 (the period for which we have the most detailed information), ninety per cent of all processions carried relics or the sacrament that had come from St. Donatian's church (see Table 2).

A final point of contrast with cities in northern Italy might be noted. The powerful presence of institutions like St. Donatian perhaps explains another characteristic feature of civic religion in Bruges. Gary Dickson remarked how the civic authorities in Perugia were able to incorporate into their pantheon not just old saints but also new ones, such as St. Bernadino of Siena, famous for his charismatic preaching. Most of the new saints venerated in the city were drawn from the ranks of the mendicant orders.⁶⁴ In late medieval Bruges, the friars, even from the new observant orders, were well represented.⁶⁵ But their influence seems much more muted. The saints and relics venerated most publicly had come to Bruges well before the advent of the friars. 'Revivalist enthusiasm',⁶⁶ with which the mendicant orders were often associated from the thirteenth century onwards, is less in evidence. In late medieval Bruges, the dominance of clerical institutions with more ancient pedigrees meant that urban authorities in search of saintly patronage found themselves drawn to older saints, whose relics could not always be seen when civic need demanded.

⁶⁴ Dickson, "115 Cults of Saints," pp. 10–17.

⁶⁵ There were at least eleven religious houses associated with the friars—Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite and Third Order—founded in Bruges from the thirteenth century onwards, four of these in the fifteenth century (including a Franciscan observant house in 1461). For an overview of all the religious houses of Bruges, see Marc Ryckaert, *Brugge: historische stedenatlas van België* (Brussels, 1991).

⁶⁶ On which see Dickson, *Religious Enthusiasm*, esp. "Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West and the Second Conversion of Europe" (article I) and "Charisma and Revivalism in the Thirteenth Century" (article II).

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Tables

Table 1
 Number of General Processions in Bruges

1381	1
1382	1
1408	1
1409	1
1410	0
1411	0
1412	1
1413	0
1414	4?
1415	0
1416	0
1417	0
1418	0
1419	1
1420	2
1421	3
1422	3
1423	3
1426	0?
1427	0?
1429	4?
1430	0
1431	0
1432	1
1433	1
1434	1
1435	0?
1436	7
1437	0
1438	1
1439	1
1440	1
1441	3
1442	2
1443	2
1444	2
1445	4
1446	3
1447	3

Table 1 (*cont.*)

1448	3?
1449	3?
1450	3?
1451	3?
1452	3
1453	9
1454	3
1455	3
1456	4
1457	9
1458	9?
1461	0?
1462	8?
1463	2?
1464	8
1465	15
1466	12
1467	13
1468	16+
1469	7
1470	6
1471	20
1472	15
1473	8
1474	28
1475	12
1476	8
1477	11
1478	14
1479	18
1480	11
1481	16
1482	28
1483	14
1484	17
1485	18+
1486	20+
1487	16
1488	20+
1489	16
1490	13
1491	10
1492	7
1493	7

Table 1 (*cont.*)

1494	5
1495	6
1496	13
1497	10
1498	12
1499	10
1500	8

Key: Gaps in years indicate gaps in evidence (particularly in the run of town accounts).

? = partial survival of town account for that year.

+ = years in which number of general processions likely to be much higher (sources indicating processions ordered for an indefinite period).

Note on sources: The main (continuous) sources are the town accounts (SAB, 216) which survive from the late thirteenth century, the St. Donatian *Acta Capituli* (BAB A50–A57) from 1345, supplemented by the (more incomplete) St. Donatian fabric accounts (BAB G1–G7). Chronicles provide more information for the later fifteenth century; from the 1460s: HS 436 and HS 437; from 1478: *Het boeck*; from the 1490s: SAB, 120, Hallegeboden. For processions involving the Holy Blood (after 1469): AHB, Register 18. The town accounts are further supplemented by accounts in the 1460s and 1480s for presents of wine, which included those to the carriers of relics: SAB, 277.

The first mention of payment for a general procession in the Fabric Accounts occurs in 1381 (see above, n. 20), but it is impossible to say for sure that there were none made before this since survival of these accounts are rarer. The first significant run of fabric accounts occurs from 1375 (BAB, G2); there are earlier accounts for 1236/7, 1251, 1271/2, 1274/5, 1306/7, 1338/9, 1354/5, 1365/6 (BAB, G1). These make no mention of ‘general processions’. There is another gap in the run of accounts from 1386–1400. For the fifteenth century, fabric accounts are much more complete (BAB, G3–7). The next reference in these accounts (after 1381–2) to a general procession occurs in 1409/10 (BAB, G2, fol. 8r), after which references are more frequent. The other source from St. Donatian’s which refers to these processions is the *acta capituli* which begin in 1345; although there are arrangements concerning processions at Rogationtide (BAB, A48, fol. 88v [1381]; A50, fols. 43v [1418], 66v [1419]), there are no explicit references to ‘general processions’ until 1420 (BAB, A50, fol. 91v). The likelihood is then that these processions were not common until the early fifteenth century—which accords with the first reference to them in civic accounts (from 1408).

Table 2
Relics carried on general processions in Bruges 1470–1500

Relics from St Donatian's church:	No. of times carried without other relics	No. of times carried with other relics
St. Donatian	45	7
St. Basil	32	23
St. Maximus	2	3
St. Eleutherius	2	—
St. John the Baptist	1	—
Sacrament	18	2
Relics from St Basil's chapel:		
Holy Blood	15	1
Relics from Our Lady's church:		
St Boniface	1	23
True Cross	—	2
Relics from St Saviour's church:		
St Eloi	1	20
Combination from three main churches: 'Drie Riven' (usually Sts. Basil, Boniface, Eloi)	21	—

Note on sources: Of the 400 or so processions that were conducted in Bruges between 1470 and 1500, we know which relics were carried in 168 of them. These are listed above. Out of these 168, 150 processions—90 percent—involved relics or the sacrament from St. Donatian's church. These statistics are restricted to this period because only one source consistently indicates the relic carried on general processions: the anonymous chronicler (*Het boeck*) which begins his account in 1477; hence I have not attempted to give figures much before this date. Even so, other sources (as listed in the *Note on Sources* for Table 1) do provide supplementary information.

CONSTRUCTING ANGLO-SAXON SANCTITY:
TRADITION, INNOVATION AND SAINT GUTHLAC

Alaric Hall

“I became a historian,” Gary Dickson told me when I met him at a dinner of the Late Antique and Early Medieval Postgraduate Seminar series at the University of Edinburgh, “because I love literature.” The desire to analyse texts without having to dismantle one’s favourite literature is an understandable one, but Gary’s comment was intended to be provocative. This study responds to the provocation by focusing on the cult of the Anglo-Saxon Saint Guthlac, but not on historians’ usual preferred source for his life, the Latin *Vita Guthlaci*. Rather, I focus primarily on the Old English poem, *Guthlac A*, traditionally viewed as a ‘literary’ rather than a ‘historical’ text. I argue that the poem affords insights into Anglo-Saxon constructions of sanctity which are not usually available from the Latin material; most notably, it illuminates ways in which tensions between traditional and Christian notions of ideal male behaviour were constructed and played out in Anglo-Saxon Christian discourses.

Saint Guthlac has enjoyed increasing attention in recent years. He has had some catching up to do: Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* does not mention him, so it was not until Bede’s dominance as the source of choice for eighth-century England was brought seriously into question in the 1980s—coincidentally with the rise of new, more culturally-orientated research questions—that the Latin evidence for Guthlac’s life and cult began to enjoy extensive scrutiny. Guthlac was one of Anglo-Saxon England’s first home-grown saints, and the focus of considerable textual production. The *Vita Guthlaci*, composed by one Felix for Ælfwald, king of East Anglia, probably between about 730 and 749, is one of our first Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives.¹ It was translated fairly closely into Old English prose, probably by the early tenth century, and an excerpt was made into a sermon known now as Vercelli Homily

¹ *Felix’s Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 18–19.

23.² Partly on the strength of this promotion, Guthlac found mention in martyrological and liturgical material.³ Chapter 50 of the *Vita* also formed the basis for an Old English poem known now as *Guthlac B*, preserved in the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library 3501), a collection of Old English poetry from the later tenth century. Sometime between its composition and its inclusion in the Exeter Book, *Guthlac B* was combined with another poem about Guthlac, which focused on his earlier life, known as *Guthlac A*.⁴

It is not clear whether *Guthlac A* shows knowledge of Felix's writing or whether it derives from independent oral traditions, but either way it has generally been viewed by turns to have been composed in a literary medium not conducive to the sober transmission of historical facts, or to be a mere derivative of Felix's *Vita*, reproducing its evidence at a greater distance from the original events.⁵ But whatever its sources, *Guthlac A* gives us access to an alternative construction of Guthlac's deeds and significance which is valuable for the history of Anglo-Saxon saints' cults. In particular, the vernacular language and traditional poetic form

² For editions, see *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des hl. Guthlac*, ed. Paul Gonsler, (Heidelberg, 1909); *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D.G. Scragg, The Early English Text Society 300 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 381–94. On dating, see Jane Roberts, "The Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*," in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose: Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, 1986), pp. 363–79; on the degree of its fidelity, see E. Gordon Whatley, "Lost in Translation: Omission of Episodes in some Old English Prose Saints' Legends," *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997), 192–98.

³ See Jane Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature: The Case of Guthlac of Crowland," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 77–80, 84–85.

⁴ All quotations from Old English poetry are based on *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (London, 1931–42) (hereafter ASPR); *Guthlac A* is ASPR 3:49–72. My translations from *Guthlac A* also make extensive reference to *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. Jane Roberts (Oxford, 1979). A useful literary survey of *Guthlac A*'s purposes and methods is Frances Randall Lipp, "Guthlac A: An Interpretation," *Mediaeval Studies* 33 (1971), 46–62. Texts from the Exeter Book have been collated with *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, ed. R.W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flower (London, 1933), and the original punctuation and capitalisation restored. *Beowulf* has been collated likewise with *The Nowell Codex: British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. XV, Second MS*, ed. Kemp Malone, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 12 (Copenhagen, 1963).

⁵ Major exceptions are P.W. Conner, "Source Studies, the Old English *Guthlac A* and the English Benedictine Reformation," *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993), 380–413; Christopher A. Jones, "Envisioning the *Cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*," *Mediaeval Studies* 57 (1995), 259–91. On *Guthlac A*'s sources, see Jane Roberts, "Guthlac A: Sources and Source Hunting," in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward D. Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 1–18.

in which *Guthlac A* is composed were more conducive than Felix's Latin to expressing distinctively Anglo-Saxon cultural responses to the saint, whereas by contrast, N.J. Higham has noted hints that Felix may not even have been an Anglo-Saxon.⁶ It is also worth noting that *Guthlac A* may be one of our earliest Old English poems: the text claims that Guthlac "*gecostad wearð in gemyndigra monna tidum · ðara þe nu gena . . . his wisdomes hlisan healdað*" ("was tempted in the times of remembering people, those who now yet . . . maintain the fame of his wisdom," lines 153–57). Old English poetry usually presents its authority through stock formulas, such as *ic gefrægn* ("I discovered") and *we gehyrdon* ("we heard"), so *Guthlac A* makes a very distinctive claim about its source-value. When Latin hagiography claims to draw on firsthand accounts, this is usually accepted unless there is evidence of mendacity, and there is no reason to suppose that this principle should not apply to *Guthlac A*. If the poem's claim is true, it was composed during the lifetimes of Guthlac's contemporaries; since Guthlac seems to have died in 714, the poem would date from the eighth century.⁷ Linguistic evidence for the poem's date is inconclusive, but the eighth century is plausible.⁸ And although the opening of *Guthlac A* is probably not original to the composition, R.D. Fulk has exposed some of the flaws in recent arguments that Old English poetry tended to be substantially recomposed in scribal transmission, encouraging a *prima facie* assumption that our manuscript reasonably closely reflects the earliest text.⁹

⁶ N.J. Higham, "Guthlac's *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia in the First Half of the Eighth Century," in *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia: Papers from a Conference Held in Manchester in 2000*, ed. David Hill and Margaret Worthington, BAR British Series 383 (Oxford, 2005), p. 85.

⁷ Conner, "Source Studies," argued that *Guthlac A* must derive from the period of the Benedictine Reform, but on grounds which strike me as insubstantial: his efforts to reinterpret the lines quoted are both unconvincing and fail to address the key issue. Jones, "Envisioning the *Cenobium*," p. 268, n. 31, gives an alternative assessment of Conner's analysis.

⁸ *The Guthlac Poems*, p. 70; Ashley Crandell Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 35, 76; Peter Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. pp. xii, 19–22, 438–52; R.D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), p. 400.

⁹ R.D. Fulk, "On Argumentation in Old English Philology, with Particular Reference to the Editing and Dating of *Beowulf*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2004), 16–25. See also Peter Orton, *The Transmission of Old English Poetry* (Turnhout, 2000). For the text's putative scribal instability, see especially Roy M. Liuzza, "The Old English *Christ* and *Guthlac*: Texts, Manuscripts, and Critics," *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 41 (1990), 1–11. The relationship between *Guthlac A*'s opening and the rest of the text is nevertheless tight;

Whereas historians have generally seen *Guthlac A* as a satellite of Felix's *Vita*, then, my concern here is to accentuate the texts' considerable differences. Points which have been perceived in the *Vita Guthlaci* sometimes emerge more clearly and convincingly from *Guthlac A*. More strikingly, much as Felix's construction of Guthlac drew on other Latin hagiography, I argue that *Guthlac A* drew on traditional vernacular poetic models.¹⁰ These models can be inferred from other Old English poetry—here I mainly use *Beowulf* and *The Wife's Lament*—by way of comparison with the English material's medieval Scandinavian analogues.¹¹ This allows us not only to infer how *Guthlac A* utilized traditional paradigms, but also to see how it subverted them in order to emphasize the power of Guthlac's Christianity over traditional modes of existence. Insofar as these arguments may encourage a subtler and fuller understanding of *Guthlac A* as a poem—which I hope they do—this is literary criticism. But such investigation also gives us unique insights into the construction of sanctity and Christianity in vernacular Anglo-Saxon discourse, arguably at a formative period not only of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, but of the Christian cultures which Anglo-Saxons were fostering on the Germanic-speaking continent.

Guthlac's youth

In Felix's account of Guthlac's youth, Guthlac's time as a warrior is accepted and even praised, a point which has been held to show Felix's syncretism of traditional and Christian ideologies. But Felix also reveals discomfort with Guthlac's military career. He took care to show that Guthlac's hostilities were directed specifically towards "*persecutorum suorum adversantiumque sibi hostium famosum excidium*" ("the glorious destruction of his persecutors and his adversarial enemies"),

see Manish Sharma, "A Reconsideration of the Structure of *Guthlac A*: The Extremes of Saintliness," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101 (2002), 185–200.

¹⁰ Audrey L. Meaney, "Felix's *Life of Guthlac*: Hagiography and/or Truth," *Proceedings of The Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society* 90 (2001), 29–48; and "Felix's *Life of Guthlac*: History or Hagiography?" in Hill and Worthington, *Æthelbald and Offa*, 77–78. For suggestions that Felix was himself influenced by his vernacular context, see Alexandra Hennesey Olsen, "Old English Poetry and Latin Prose: The Reverse Context," *Classica et Medievalia: Revue Danoise de Philologie et d'Histoire* 34 (1983), 273–82; and Gernot R. Wieland, "Aures lectoris: Orality and Literacy in Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 7 (1997), 168–77.

¹¹ ASPR 4:3–98 (*Beowulf*); 3:210–11 (*The Wife's Lament*).

implying raids directed only at those who threatened him, rather than at indiscriminate sources of wealth.¹² Moreover, “*velut ex divino consilio edoctus tertiam partem adgregatae gazae possidentibus remittebat*” (“as though taught by divine counsel, he would return a third share of the collected treasure to the owners”).¹³ *Guthlac A*’s handling of the issue is quite different. The scene which gets *Guthlac A*’s narrative underway, running from line 108, describes Guthlac’s youth as a warrior and how an “*atela gæst*” (“loathsome spirit”):

... hyne scyhte þæt he sceaðena gemot	... incited him so that he sought
nihtes sohte ond þurh neþinge	a band of pillagers by night, and
wunne æfter worulde swa doð	struggled after the worldly through
wræcmæcgas	daring, as do exiles/mercenaries,
þa þe ne bimurnað monnes feore	those who do not mourn for the
þæs þe him to honda huþe gelædeð	life of a man which brings booty
butan hy þy reafe rædan motan	to their hands, as long as they can
	control the spoil thereby. (lines
	127–32)

While *Guthlac A*, like Felix, avoids making a wholesale attack on traditional heroic social values—in this case by suggesting that Guthlac’s band is outside society—it is forthright in characterizing Guthlac as a diabolically inspired criminal. Tellingly, *wræcmæcgas* (mercenaries/exilemen) occurs three more times in *Guthlac A* (in lines 231, 263 and 558), invariably denoting the *gæstas* who beset Guthlac. In lines 114–16, Guthlac abandons his heinous lifestyle specifically by the intervention of an angel struggling with the devil who previously held him:

Tid was toweward hine twegen ymb	the time was nigh—about him,
weardas wacedon þa gewin drugon	two guardians kept watch—when
engel dryhtnes ond se atela gæst	the angel of the Lord and the
	terrible demon endured a struggle.

The differences between the approaches to Guthlac’s youth in Felix’s text and *Guthlac A* can be understood in terms of differing literary purposes. Felix had been commissioned to write a *Vita* in praise of Guthlac by Ælfwald, king of East Anglia, presumably as a showpiece whereby Ælfwald could present himself as a patron of the Church, the ruler of the increasingly Latinate kingdom in which Guthlac had

¹² Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chap. 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, chap. 17.

lived.¹⁴ Felix adopted a conventional hagiographical model in which the saint was marked out as such from birth, and as a child was serious and unconcerned with the worldly.¹⁵ The choice was evidently wise, as this motif was emphasized in later Old English material, but it made Guthlac's military career problematic.¹⁶ The approach taken by *Guthlac A*, however, puts a new emphasis on conversion and redemption, perhaps suggesting a more direct role for the text in the discourse of Christian communities. Moreover, the intercessory role of the *engel* in lines 114–6 recurs numerous times in *Guthlac A*.¹⁷ The description of Guthlac's abandonment of his warrior past concludes, in lines 133–35, with:

<p>Swa hy hine trymedon on twa healfa · oppæt þæs gewinnes weoroda dryhten on þæs engles dom ende gereahte ·</p>	<p>Thus, they then strengthened him on the two sides until the lord of hosts ordained the end of that struggle according to the judgement of the angel.</p>
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God is distant from these proceedings: although he makes the ultimate decision as to which side should win, that same fact implies that the angel who brings about Guthlac's conversion is acting on his own initiative. *Guthlac A* does not apparently distinguish between saints and angels—Guthlac himself achieves *engelcunde* ('angelhood', line 101, cf. 781–82)—so we may consider that here we have the first of many implicit indicators that just as Guthlac was aided by an angel, so may the audience of *Guthlac A* turn to Guthlac for similar assistance.

But just as Felix modelled his portrayal of Guthlac on other saints' lives, literary models deriving from Old English poetic narratives may have played a part in *Guthlac A*'s handling of Guthlac's warrior past. Our only strong evidence for such traditional narratives is *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* has been considered alongside *Guthlac A* before, but a range of comparisons between the poems have yet to be made.¹⁸ Thus *Beowulf*,

¹⁴ See also Higham, "Guthlac's Vita."

¹⁵ Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chaps. 4–15; cf. Dorothy Ann Bray, *A List of Motifs in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints* (Helsinki, 1992), pp. 114–15.

¹⁶ See Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature," pp. 77–80.

¹⁷ See in particular Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, *Guthlac of Croyland: A Study of Heroic Hagiography* (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 27–29; Robin Norris, "The Augustinian Theory of Use and Enjoyment in *Guthlac A* and *B*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 104 (2003), pp. 171–74; Sharma, "A Reconsideration," pp. 190–92; and n. 54, below.

¹⁸ See for example, Olsen, *Guthlac*, 25–49; and notes 39 and 44, below.

too, was unpromising as a youth (lines 2183b–89).¹⁹ This in itself tells us little, since *Beowulf* cannot simply be assumed to be representative of Anglo-Saxon tradition. However, several motifs and motif-groups in *Beowulf* are also common in Old Icelandic sagas, particularly those describing the heroic past prior to the settlement of Iceland (*fornaldarsögur*), which show that *Beowulf* was not unique in the literature of northwest European Germanic-speakers—and it is common for saga heroes (like folktale heroes widely) to begin their careers as unpromising youths.²⁰ Whereas for Felix, a saint with an unpromising start to his career posed a serious literary problem, for the *Guthlac A* poet it may have been a bonus. The poet certainly put the idea to good effect: *Guthlac A* does not simply borrow the motif of the unpromising youth, but inverts it. Normally in Scandinavian material the inactive youth emerges as a heroic warrior; but in *Guthlac A*, the unpromisingly martial youth becomes a peaceable saint feeding birds from his hands (lines 736–41). The implications of this reading are that *Guthlac A* engages more intimately with its traditional literary context than has previously been supposed, but also that it subverts the expectations established by this context the more clearly to contrast Guthlac's exemplary Christian life with those of traditional heroes.

Mound-breaking and monster-fighting

The argument that *Guthlac A* both draws on and subverts vernacular poetic traditions of heroic narratives can be extended to the saint's encounters with the demons. Numerous commentators have observed that the *Vita Guthlaci* alters its prime model, Evagrius's *Vita Antonii*, most notably by making the demons which feature in the *Vita* more prominent

¹⁹ Raymond P. Tripp, Jr. ("Did Beowulf have an Inglorious Youth?" *Studia Neophilologica* 61 [1989], 129–43) usefully emphasizes the difficulties of this passage, but his unsuccessful search for alternative interpretations serves to underscore the value of the traditional reading.

²⁰ See Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (Copenhagen, 1966), pp. 100–99; Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends* (rev. ed., 1955–1958; reprint, London, 1966), L100–99. On *Beowulf*'s connections with sagas, see Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence: The Frustrated Connection between "Beowulf" and "Grettis saga"* (Toronto, 1998). Despite its title, Fjalldal's study provides a useful survey of the texts' similarities.

and corporeal.²¹ There are also some resemblances between the demons of the *Vita* and the monsters which Beowulf fights in Denmark.²² But Guthlac's struggles with the demons comprise only twenty-four pages out of the one hundred and thirty-two of Bertram Colgrave's edition of the *Vita Guthlaci*; they are also arguably less ubiquitous than in one of Felix's main models, Evagrius's *Vita Antonii*.²³ Guthlac's struggles with demons are merely a prelude to the real substance of the *Vita*: his miracles. The most dramatic of the struggles—when Guthlac is dragged to the gates of Hell—is rather defused by two further and inevitably anticlimactic demonic assaults.²⁴ The traditional-looking characteristics of Felix's *Vita* appear more convincingly—and suggestively—in *Guthlac A*. Here, the struggles with the demons comprise almost the whole poem, suggesting an early Christian Anglo-Saxon ideological concern with monsters which is consistent with a range of textual and artistic evidence in the same direction.²⁵ Guthlac's miracle-working career is entirely ignored in favour of a narrative focus on his demon-fighting, culminating in the contest at the gates of Hell.

Moreover, although in the *Vita Guthlaci*, Guthlac's struggles with the demons have important roles, Felix nonetheless makes them an accidental outcome of Guthlac's search for a hermitage in the wilderness.²⁶ The motivation of *Guthlac A*'s hero, however, is entirely different (lines 142–49):

²¹ See for example Benjamin P. Kurtz, *From St. Antony to St. Guthlac: A Study in Biography*, University of California Publications in Modern Philology 12, pt. 2 (Berkeley, 1926), pp. 103–46 (esp. pp. 109–16); Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of "Beowulf"* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 80–81; Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3d ed. (London, 1991), pp. 229–39; Clemons, *Interactions*, pp. 19–22.

²² See Whitelock, *The Audience*, pp. 80–82.

²³ Felix, *Felix's Life*, pp. 94–117; Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, "Guthlac's Crossings," *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic* 2 (2001), pp. 8–10.

²⁴ Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chaps. 34, 36. O'Brien O'Keefe ("Guthlac's Crossings," p. 22) argued that "unless we are to accuse Felix of a singular ineptitude in his arrangement . . . the placing of the visit of the Britons [*sic*, for a band of Welsh-speaking demons] after the visit to Hell is not bathos. The chapter is, rather, the culmination of the contests for the island." Felix's text is not "singularly inept," but this is not in itself an argument against perceiving an anticlimax.

²⁵ Clemons, *Interactions*, pp. 16–22.

²⁶ Cf. O'Brien O'Keefe, "Guthlac's Crossings."

hy him sylf hyra
 onsyn ywdon ond þær ær fela
 setla gesæton þonan sið tugon
 wide waðe wuldre byscyrede
 lyftlacende was seo londes stow
 bimipen fore monnum · oppæt meotud
 onwrah
 beorg on bearwe þa se bytla cwom
 se þær haligne ham arærde ·

They revealed
 their face to him, and there
 previously settled many
 dwelling-places; thence they
 undertook a journey, with
 wide wandering, deprived of
 glory, hovering in the air. That
 place of the land was hidden
 from men until the Measurer
 revealed the hill in a grove,
 when the builder came, he
 who raised up a holy home
 there.

Here, Guthlac is an aggressor on a divinely inspired mission to rid remote places of demons and to build a home in them.²⁷ The *beorg*'s isolation, and the intimate relationship of the *gæstas* with the *beorg* (or here *beorgas*) is emphasized by the accusation of Guthlac's tormentors that

... he for wlence on westenne
 beorgas bræce þær hy bidinge
 earmes ondsacan æror mostun
 æfter tintergum tidum brucan ·
 ðonne hy of waþum · werge cwomon
 restan rynecragum rowe gefegon
 was him seo gelyfed þurh lytel fæc
 stod seo dygle stow dryhtne in gemyndum
 idel ond æmen eþelrichte feor ·
 bád bisæce betran hyrdes

... for pride he broke mounds/
 hills in the waste where
 they, enduring, wretched
 adversaries, could previously
 spend time after torments,
 when they, accursed, came
 weary from wandering to rest
 for ?passing periods of time.
 They enjoyed peace—which
 was permitted to them for a
 little while. That hidden place
 stood in the thoughts of the
 Lord, idle and uninhabited,
 far from the law of hereditary
 land; it awaited the ?claim of a
 better shepherd. (lines 208–17)

²⁷ Cf. Jones, "Envisioning the *Cenobium*."

Guthlac explicitly undertakes a campaign, cleansing one mound after another of its demons, in a divinely directed programme for extending Christian territory into a region which is “*epelrihte feor*” (“far from the law of hereditary land”). This again has medieval Icelandic parallels, in texts which associate Scandinavia’s conversion with the driving of monsters from the land.²⁸

Our understanding of the greater belligerence of Guthlac in *Guthlac A* can be developed through the detail that *Guthlac A* specifies the location of Guthlac’s struggles as a *beorg* no fewer than fourteen times. As Paul F. Reichardt emphasized when he read Guthlac’s *beorg* as a mountain, *beorg*’s semantic range could be extensive: Anglo-Saxons used it to specify natural mounds, burial mounds, hills, cliffs and mountains.²⁹ However, in literature composed in Old English (rather than translated from Latin), and in Old English place-names, burial mounds and small, rounded hills seem the usual denotations. Accordingly, *Guthlac B*, whose fidelity to the *Vita Guthlaci* makes its depiction of a *tumulus* certain, usually uses *beorg* to specify Guthlac’s abode.³⁰ Manish Sharma developed Reichardt’s points to show that the *beorg* provides for theologically appropriate images of ascension in *Guthlac A*.³¹ However, while the ascent of a mountain as a metaphor for saintly progress may be relevant to *Guthlac A*, the demon-inhabited *beorg* has closer parallels in the eleventh-century portrayals of Hell by illustrator F of the Anglo-Saxon psalter, Harley 603; and in the copy of *The Marvels of the East*, Cotton Tiberius B.v, both in the British Library. Sarah Semple has argued that the images in these manuscripts “exemplify a distinctly Anglo-Saxon version of hell and damnation... It comprises a living-dead existence, trapped within the earth, often within a hollow beneath a hill or mound, tormented by demons.” The portrayals are consistent with archaeological evidence for the association of Anglo-Saxon execution burials with burial mounds at

²⁸ See Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 85–91. Studies on monsters in Old Icelandic literature have otherwise generally looked at monsters from a secular, folkloric perspective; a closer examination of their roles in terms of the histories of Scandinavian conversion in which they so often appear is overdue.

²⁹ Paul F. Reichardt, “*Guthlac A* and the Landscape of Spiritual Perfection,” *Neophilologus* 58 (1974), 331–38; cf. *The Dictionary of Old English*, ed. Angus Cameron, A.C. Amos, and Antonette diPaolo Healey, CD-ROM (Toronto, 1986–), s.v. *beorg*.

³⁰ In addition to the *Dictionary of Old English*, see Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 145–52. On the hagiographic conventionality of a tomb as a hermitage, see Meaney, “*Felix’s Life of Guthlac*,” p. 80.

³¹ Sharma, “A Reconsideration,” pp. 194–97.

marginal points in later Anglo-Saxon landscapes.³² While this evidence is mainly later than the composition of *Guthlac A*, it is not unreasonable to assume that similar ideas circulated earlier, and that the poem drew on them: it, too, depicts demons dwelling in mounds.

It is therefore of interest that the *gæstas* specify that Guthlac “*beorgas bræce*”. The basic meaning of *bræcan* is ‘to break apart or asunder’, but it can also mean ‘to break into (something)’.³³ We have little evidence, archaeological or otherwise, for people breaking into mounds in Anglo-Saxon England; in fact, our main evidence is in Felix’s *Vita Guthlaci* itself, which reads, “*erat itaque in praedicta insula tumulus agrestibus glaebis coactervatus, quem olim avari solitudinis frequentatores lucri ergo illic acquirendi defodientes scindebant*” (“And there was on the aforementioned island/peninsula a mound brought together with clods from the fields, which greedy visitors of the wilderness once broke open for wealth, digging deep to acquire it”).³⁴ The prose Old English translation renders this, “*Was þær in þam sprecenan iglande sum mycel hlæw of eorþan geworht, þone ylcan hlæw iu geara men bræcon and dulfon for feos þingum*” (“There, on that aforementioned island/peninsula, there was a certain large burial-mound made out of earth; long before, people *bræcon* and dug into that same mound for items of treasure”); implying that *bræcan* could be used to denote mound-breaking.³⁵ This reading is supported by references in

³² Sarah Semple, “Illustrations of Damnation in Late Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2003), p. 240. See also Andrew Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England: Life and Landscape* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 105–10; and “Burials, Boundaries and Charters in Anglo-Saxon England: A Reassessment,” in *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (London, 2002), pp. 171–94. Semple’s analysis relies to some extent on her earlier, “A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England,” *World Archaeology* 30 (1998–1999), 109–26; which in its handling of literary and onomastic evidence is often inaccurate or credulous, but which in its broad outlines remains convincing. For another assessment of similar material, see Hilda R. Ellis Davidson, “The Hill of the Dragon: Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds in Literature and Archaeology,” *Folk-Lore* 61 (1950), 169–85.

³³ *Dictionary of Old English*, s.v. *bræcan* section 3a; cf. 3b, 4a, 7.

³⁴ Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chap. 28.

³⁵ *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben*, p. 117. Meaney (“Felix’s *Life of Guthlac*,” p. 79) has pointed out that contrary to conventional wisdom, Crowland was not an island but a peninsula. She argued that “on the east, the peninsula... would have been more easily reached by boat via the River Welland than by land, so that it came to be regarded as an island”. A simpler explanation, however, is that both the Old English *ig* and the Anglo-Latin term *insula* used by Felix meant not only ‘island’ but ‘peninsula’, as in Bede’s comment that “*Seleseu... dicitur Latine insula uituli marini. Est enim locus undique mari circumdatus praeter ab occidente, unde habet ingressum amplitudinis quasi iactus fundae; qualis locus a Latinis paeninsula, a Grecis solet cherronesos uocari*” (*Ecclesiastical History* 4.13; Bede, *Histoire*

Old English charter boundary clauses to *gebrocene beorgas*, as in a well-preserved charter of King Edgar to one Cenwulf, from 961: “of þam slæde on gerihthe to broccenan beorge. of þam beorge to wudu forda” (“from that slade to the *broccen beorg*; from that *beorg* to wood-ford”).³⁶ Although one might imagine these *beorgas* not to have been burial mounds, or to have been damaged in some other way (while still remaining distinctive enough to serve as boundary markers), it seems likely that at least some were burial mounds which had visibly been broken into. Although in the *Vita Guthlaci* Guthlac lives in the *tumulus*, in *Guthlac A* he unambiguously builds himself a home upon the *beorg*, and there is no hint that he breaks into it to live inside.³⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that *beorgas bræce* at least connoted mound-breaking.

As with Guthlac’s unpromising youth, this divergence from Felix’s account is consistent with the evidence for traditional heroic narratives afforded by Old Icelandic sagas. It is common in sagas for a hero to establish his reputation by breaking into the barrow of a *draugr* (‘undead warrior’) and defeating him for his treasure, or otherwise overcoming *draugar*.³⁸ Although *Beowulf* does not involve any mound-breakings (Beowulf’s own intrusion into the world of *gestas* being his entry into a *mere*), it shares sufficient other details with Old Icelandic stories of this kind to show the potential relevance of the Icelandic material to understanding traditional Anglo-Saxon heroic narratives.³⁹ While we

ecclésiastique du peuple Anglais = Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum, 3 vols., ed. and trans. Andre Crépin, et al., Sources chrétiennes 489–491 [Paris, 2005], 2:264–66).

³⁶ S 367 in S.E. Kelly, *The Electronic Sawyer: An Online Version of the Revised Edition of Sawyer’s “Anglo-Saxon Charters”, section one [S 1–1602]* (British Academy/Royal Historical Society Joint Committee on Anglo-Saxon Charters, 1999), <<http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/eSawyer2.html>> (accessed 6 April 2006); quoted from *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. Walter de Gray Birch, 3 vols. (London, 1885–1893), 3:297. For further examples, see S 254, 360, 411, 443, 596, 1325, 1542 and 1819 (not all of which are independent); cf. *Dictionary of Old English*, s.vv. *brecan*, *gebrecan*. Comparative linguistic evidence for this interpretation is regrettably lacking. The one medieval Germanic language whose literature refers at all often to breaking into burial mounds, Old Icelandic, lacks a cognate of *brecan*; but it does use its normal word for breaking, the more distantly related *brjóta* (*Orðbog over det norrøne prosasprog/Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* [Copenhagen, 1983–], s.v. §7).

³⁷ Cf. Jones, “Envisioning the *Cenobium*,” pp. 271–79.

³⁸ Boberg, *Motif-Index*, E461.2; D838.5; cf. E481.3.1. Kathryn Hume, “From Saga to Romance: The Use of Monsters in Old Norse Literature,” *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980), 3–4; Mary Danielli, “Initiation Ceremonial from Norse Literature,” *Folk-Lore* 61 (1945), 229–45; A. Margaret Arent, “The Heroic Pattern: Old Germanic Helmets: *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga*,” in *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium*, ed. Edgar C. Polomé (Austin, 1969), pp. 130–99.

³⁹ See prominently Danielli, “Initiation Ceremonial”; Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the “Beowulf”-Manuscript*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 2003), pp.

cannot be certain, then, it is plausible that stories of heroes making their reputation by entering burial mounds and fighting their inhabitant(s) were traditional in Anglo-Saxon England, and that *Guthlac A* took up and redeployed the motif.

There is reason, then, to think that *Guthlac A*'s distinctive portrayal of Guthlac's venture into the wilderness as an offensive against the demons which inhabit it draws on traditional heroic narratives. As with Guthlac's inglorious youth, however, it is possible to see traditional narrative patterns not only to have been borrowed, but subverted.⁴⁰ Guthlac is frequently denoted using the extensive Old English poetic lexicon of warriors, but, as Joyce Hill noted, such nouns are rarely used without qualification.⁴¹ In the same way, comparison between *Guthlac A* and *Beowulf* reveals some striking similarities of diction, but also some striking differences. When the *gæstas* describe how Guthlac "*beorgas bræce*," they specifically portray his motive as *wlenco* ('pride'), a motivation imputed to Beowulf on his arrival among the Danes when he comes to fight Grendel (line 338). The point of the accusation in *Guthlac A* is of course that it is slanderous: it serves to demonstrate that in this poem, unlike in the speech of the Danish watchman in *Beowulf*, *wlenco* is a negative attribute. By contrast, according to lines 150–51, when Guthlac assaulted the *beorg*,

Nalæs þy he giemde	þurh gitsunga	he did not care at all, through greeds,
lænes lifwelan	ac...gode	for transient life-fortune, but...for
		God.

This for its own part contrasts with the mound-breakings in the Icelandic accounts of young heroes' first great deeds, in which treasure as well as fame is a major attraction.⁴² Likewise, although Beowulf explicitly enters Grendel's mother's *mere* in pursuit of a feud rather than treasure, treasure is an outcome of the expedition, while by the time of his final fight with the dragon, it is an explicit motivation.⁴³ Once more, Guthlac transcends the heroic paradigm.

140–71; and Fjalldal, *The Long Arm*. On *gæst* in *Beowulf* and *Guthlac A*, see Clemoes, *Interactions*, pp. 439–53.

⁴⁰ My argument here develops those of Dee Dyas, *Images of Faith in English Literature 700–1500: An Introduction* (London, 1997), pp. 21–26.

⁴¹ Joyce Hill, "The Soldier of Christ in Old English Prose and Poetry," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 12 (1981), 65–69. For learned authorship and audience, see especially Olsen, *Guthlac*, pp. 15–21.

⁴² Cf. Hume, "From Saga to Romance," p. 4.

⁴³ *Beowulf*, lines 2743–51, 2764–6, 3011–15.

Guthlac A suggests to its audience, then, that Guthlac is like traditional heroes in his deeds, but not in his motivations. He differs also in his methods, defeating his demonic foes not by physical force, but by disputation, invoking God, and holding firm to his faith.⁴⁴ The point is implicit throughout the poem, but is also made explicit in lines 302–5:

no ic eow sweord ongean mid gebolgne hond oðberan þence worulde wæpen ne sceal þes wong gode þurh blodgyte gebuen weorðan ·	I do not intend to wield a sword against you with an enraged hand, a weapon of the world; this good field must not become inhabited through bloodshed.
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Guthlac unambiguously and ostentatiously contrasts his methods with heroic ones. Nor can the implications of his refusal of any “*worulde wæpen*” (“weapon of the world”) be mistaken, since the poem earlier specifies that he fights “*mid gæstlicum wæpnum*” (“with spiritual weapons,” lines 177–78). As Andy Orchard has emphasized, in *Beowulf*, *gebolgen* (‘enraged’) is applied four times to Beowulf in his monster-fights, and otherwise to his adversaries; it is a characteristic which Guthlac explicitly spurns, but which is applied (in lines 287 and 557) to his demonic adversaries.⁴⁵

That the affinities with heroic narrative structures identified here in *Guthlac A* were recognized by Anglo-Saxons is suggested by the combination of *Guthlac A* with *Guthlac B* in the Exeter Book. Like *Beowulf*, the pairing of the poems produces a narrative of two sections, the first portraying the monster-fighting which establishes an (unpromising) youth as a hero, the second portraying his last great deed—a structure identical to that of *Beowulf*. When Margaret E. Goldsmith observed this, she found the similarity so striking that she supposed that *Guthlac A* and *B* must have been modelled on *Beowulf*, a perspective which could be sup-

⁴⁴ For a recent discussion of Guthlac’s use of speech, see Angela Abdou, “Speech and Power in Old English Conversion Narratives,” *Florilegium*, 17 (2000), pp. 204–10. This is not to deny that traditional roots underlie *Guthlac A*’s verbal battle: it may be based on ‘flyting’ literature suggested by the verbal conflict between Unferth and Beowulf in *Beowulf* lines 499–606. This interesting possibility, however, does not detract from the didactic significance of Guthlac’s refusal of physical battle.

⁴⁵ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 32. Margaret E. Goldsmith (*The Mode and Meaning of “Beowulf”* [London, 1970], p. 258) emphasized these lines, making a similar point. It must be admitted that God is in *Genesis A/B* (ASPR 1:3–87), lines 54 and 299 described as *gebolgen*; and in *Beowulf*, line 2331, Beowulf fears that he has *gebulge* God; but this does not preclude the argument regarding *Guthlac A*.

ported by what seems to be an emergent consensus that *Beowulf* exerted literary influence on other Old English poems (most clearly *Andreas*).⁴⁶ But the *fornaldarsögur* suggest that the structure was a traditional one: *fornaldarsaga*-heroes normally have two major adventures in their careers, one of which establishes their reputation, and the other of which kills them.⁴⁷ Possibly, such a structure is also present within *Guthlac A*. The assaults of the demons are divided into two main blocks by the respite in lines 323–47, the second being the climactic struggle before the door of Hell.⁴⁸ Most of the resonances with young heroes' monster-fights appear in the first block, while the second section allegorically presents Guthlac's death and rebirth into eternal life, and proceeds to describe his actual ascension to heaven.⁴⁹ However, the two sections are not demarcated by the fitt-markings in the Exeter Book and are none too clearly distinguished. We might ascribe this to the nature of the poet's sources—Guthlac essentially only undertook one great heroic deed, a problem which was only circumvented when *Guthlac A* was combined with *Guthlac B*—but the point cannot be pressed.

The contrasting of heroic and holy methods of monster-fighting, emphasizing the superior power of Christian devotion, is not unique to *Guthlac A*. It is common for dragon-fighting saints to rescue “victims who are often described as pagans (or apostate or sceptical Christians)”, while at times the saint succeeds where a traditional hero has failed, as in the *Vita prima Sancti Carantoci*, where Carannog banishes a dragon which King Arthur cannot defeat.⁵⁰ The validity and significance of this kind of comparison is further suggested by Christine Rauer's argument that *Beowulf*'s dragon-fight is modelled on hagiographical ones.⁵¹ It has long been accepted that the *Beowulf*-poet expected his audience to know stories besides those told in *Beowulf* itself and to recall them to deepen

⁴⁶ Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning*, pp. 257–59; Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to “Beowulf”* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 163–68.

⁴⁷ Ruth Richter-Gould, “Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda: A Structural Analysis,” *Scandinavian Studies* 52 (1980), 423–41 (esp. pp. 435, 440 n. 23).

⁴⁸ The division is emphasized by Thomas D. Hill, “The Middle Way: *Idel-Wuldor* and *Egesa* in the Old English *Guthlac A*,” *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 30 (1979), 182–87.

⁴⁹ See *The Guthlac Poems*, pp. 35–36.

⁵⁰ Christine Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 71; *Vitae sanctorum britaniae et genealogiae*, ed. Arthur W. Wade-Evans (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 145–46; cf. O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 41–42.

⁵¹ Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*, esp. pp. 52–86.

their appreciation of it. It is now apparent that saints' lives could have been among them: the *Beowulf*-poet, and implicitly his audience, can be expected to have contrasted Beowulf's methods of dragon-fighting with saints' methods—the pagan with the Christian—with important consequences for the poem's meaning.⁵² *Beowulf* implicitly juxtaposes the efforts of a traditional pagan hero (who does not know the Christian God and must fight with worldly weapons) with saints' lives where, in Rauer's words, "In the great majority of cases the saint inflicts no physical violence on the dragon. More frequently, verbal commands are accompanied by stylized gestures which involve the binding, sending away, locking up, or stylized beating of the dragon." Nor do dragons prove able to fight the saint in any way.⁵³ Beowulf's dragon-fight is disastrous for his people, since with his death and the ascendance of Wiglaf, a Swedish invasion of the Geats seems assured.⁵⁴ But the comparison with saints' lives shows that had Beowulf known Christianity, the dragon could have been safely banished, Beowulf succeeding on all fronts. Read either in this hagiographical context, or in the context of Guthlac's own refusal to wield a sword, Beowulf's statement just before he fights the dragon (lines 2518–21) acquires a new undertow:

nolde ic sweord beran wæpen to wyrme gif ic wiste hu wið ðam aglæcean elles meahte gylpe wiðgripan swa ic gio wið grendle dyde	I would not want to bear a sword, a weapon against the dragon, if I knew how I might otherwise grapple against that awesome creature by my pledge, as I did once against Grendel.
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The enlightened audience might hope here for Beowulf's realization, however impracticable, that an alternative paradigm for monster-slaying might exist; instead, however, he disappoints hopes by demonstrating how far his thinking is limited by the traditional paradigm by which he has lived.

Guthlac A and *Beowulf*, then, can be seen as two sides of the same coin. One is a saint's life which manipulates its traditional medium to contrast the power of the saint as a monster-fighter with the lesser capacity of traditional heroes. The other depicts the pagan, heroic past, using—amongst other things—allusion to saints' lives to show its

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

⁵⁴ *Beowulf*, lines 2922–3030. For Wiglaf's inherited involvement in the Swedish-Geatish feud, see lines 2602–27.

inferiority to the Christian present. *Guthlac A* shapes this argument to encourage faith in Christian means of facing supernatural threats over traditional ones, specifically consolidating Guthlac's cult. I have already discussed how Guthlac is freed from the clutches of the devil by an angel; his final victory over the demons is won by the protection and intervention of Saint Bartholomew (in *Guthlac A*, both saint and angel), so that Guthlac himself becomes an angel-saint, with the power to help mortals as he himself was helped. This theme is also emphasized in Vercelli Homily 23, but *Guthlac A* is able to take the prospect a step further: "*sīwa wæs Guðlaces gæst geleded engla fæðmum*" ("Guthlac's spirit was led to the embraces of angels," lines 781–82), we are told, but nine lines later the poem adds that "*sīwa soðfæstra sawla motun . . .*" ("so can the souls of the righteous," line 790).⁵⁵ In this way, Guthlac himself becomes a paradigm for reaching heaven, and implicitly a psychopomp able to extend the chain reaction of salvation to *Guthlac A*'s listeners.

Pagan places?

I have discussed above the prospect that the *beorg* in *Guthlac A* was expected to recall burial mounds, which in Christian Anglo-Saxon worldviews might be inhabited by the damned, and which in traditional culture heroes might break into in search of treasure. In this final section, I develop these observations, drawing this time not on *Beowulf*, but on *The Wife's Lament*, which like *Guthlac A* survives in the Exeter Book. *The Wife's Lament* has been the subject of extensive debate, and there is much about its interpretation that is in doubt; it has occasionally been set alongside *Guthlac A*, but never in detail.⁵⁶ Despite the difficulties, comparison of *Guthlac A* with *The Wife's Lament* suggests that Guthlac's hermitage had stronger connotations of exile and abandonment than has hitherto been realised. In addition, several scholars have argued that *Guthlac A* alludes in its portrayal of the *beorg* to pagan ritual sites.

⁵⁵ Roberts, "The Old English Prose Translation," pp. 372–75; *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 392.

⁵⁶ See for example Semple, "A Fear of the Past"; and A.N. Doane, "Heathen Form and Christian Function in 'The Wife's Lament,'" *Mediaeval Studies* 28 (1966), 83–84. For a judicious recent survey of opinion, to whose conclusions I largely subscribe, see John D. Niles, "The Problem of the Ending of *The Wife's Lament*," *Speculum* 78 (2003), 1107–50 (esp. pp. 1107–12). My own arguments here build on my earlier "The Images and Structure of *The Wife's Lament*," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 33 (2002), 1–29 (also available at <<http://www.alarichall.org.uk>> and <<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/2882/>>).

Clear evidence to support this reading has been lacking, but I suggest that evidence can be adduced on the one hand from *The Wife's Lament* and its analogues, and on the other from a body of archaeological evidence for late pagan Anglo-Saxon ritual sites which was not available to earlier commentators.⁵⁷ Scepticism about the reading also relates to the later twentieth-century revisionism concerning ill-founded paganizing readings of Christian Anglo-Saxon texts, epitomized by Eric Gerald Stanley's *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*.⁵⁸ This being so, it is worth making two general points before proceeding. Firstly, for *Guthlac A* to portray Guthlac storming a pagan ritual site and reconsecrating it for Christianity would not in itself be any cause for surprise in a hagiographical work: what would be unusual would merely be that the poem portrays this through allusion rather than explicitly.⁵⁹ Secondly, it is worth emphasizing the surprisingly little-noted fact that Felix explicitly drew on an Anglo-Saxon source, Cissa, who had still been a pagan during Guthlac's time as an anchorite, and was still alive when Felix wrote Guthlac's *Vita*.⁶⁰ Although the point is not necessary for my argument, then, it is plausible that *Guthlac A*'s audience knew Anglo-Saxon pagan practices from personal experience or at least contemporary accounts. *Guthlac A* can be argued to allude to a topos of a pagan place, and again to subvert its traditional handling in order to emphasize Guthlac's power as a Christian saint.

Critics have tended to conflate the setting of *Guthlac A* with that of Felix's *Vita*.⁶¹ But as Laurence K. Shook pointed out in 1960, the landscapes depicted in the texts are strikingly different, and I have

⁵⁷ Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Guthlac A: The Battle for the Beorg," *Neophilologus* 62 (1978), 135–42; Davidson, "The Hill of the Dragon," pp. 176–7; cf. Lawrence K. Shook, "The Burial Mound in *Guthlac A*," *Modern Philology* 58 (1960), 1–10; Alfred K. Siewers, "Landscapes of Conversion: Guthlac's Mound and Grendel's Mere as Expressions of Anglo-Saxon Nation-Building," *Viator* 34 (2003), pp. 21–25. Their lack of evidence is emphasized for example by Jane Roberts, "Guthlac A," p. 11.

⁵⁸ Eric Gerald Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (Cambridge, 1975) appeared in its second edition as *Imagining the Anglo-Saxon Past: "The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism" and "Anglo-Saxon Trial by Jury"* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁵⁹ For examples, see Richard M. Price, "The Holy Man and Christianization from the Apocryphal Apostles to St Stephen of Perm," in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward (Oxford, 1999), pp. 215–38 (esp. pp. 216–23).

⁶⁰ Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chap. 48; cf. prologue.

⁶¹ To cite only a few recent studies: Semple, "A Fear of the Past," 112–13; Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 44; John Hines, *Voices in the Past: English Literature and Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 62; Siewers, "Landscapes of Conversion," pp. 13–15 (despite the comments on p. 23).

emphasized above how differently they function.⁶² Felix's Guthlac settles an *insula* in a fen. But *Guthlac A* makes no suggestion of a fen—which, as *Beowulf* shows, was not because Old English poetry was unsuited to describing such landscapes. Indeed, as I have mentioned, Felix's fens resonate with the monster-lairs attested in *Beowulf* and other vernacular Anglo-Saxon evidence, making the omission in *Guthlac A* doubly surprising.⁶³ Conversely, *Guthlac A* twice describes the scene of Guthlac's activity as a "*beorg on bearwe*" ("*beorg* in a grove", lines 148, 429). This is paralleled in Felix's text, which mentions that the Fens contain, amongst other things, "*crebris insularum nemorumque*" ("hills of islands and groves"), and that Guthlac dwelt "*inter umbrosa solitudinis nemora solus*" ("alone in the shadowy groves of the solitary place").⁶⁴ But details about landscape are rare in Old English poetry, so *Guthlac A*'s repeated mention of the *beorg on bearwe* is more striking than Felix's passing references in a description of the fenland's general character. *Guthlac A*'s landscape is distinctive as Old English poetry, and distinct from Felix's.

So it is of interest that a similar landscape is described in *The Wife's Lament*. In lines 27–32, what seems certainly to be an exiled female speaker tells us that

heht mec mon wunian on wuda bearwe
 under actreo in þam eorðscrafe ·
 eald is þes eorðsele eal ic eom oflongad ·
 sindon dena dimme duna uphea
 bitre burgtunas brerum beweaxne
 wic wywna leas

A person commended me to
 dwell in a grove of the woods,
 under an oak tree, in the earth-
 cave [potentially also 'grave'].
 This earth-hall is old; I am wholly
 beset by longing. The valleys are
 deep, the hills high, bitter/sharp
burgtunas overgrown/surrounded
 with thorny plants: a dwelling
 without happiness.

The high hills and dim valleys here recall portrayals of Hell and hellish places elsewhere in Old English poetry, and it seems likely that we can read this location as a kind of anti-paradise.⁶⁵ Moreover, the speaker adds that she walks alone "*under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu*" ("under an oak tree, through these earth-caves," line 36). As in *Guthlac A*, repetition demands attention. The scene in *The Wife's Lament* bears some close

⁶² Shook, "The Burial Mound"; cf. Reichardt, "*Guthlac A*".

⁶³ See notes 20 and 21, above.

⁶⁴ Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*, chaps. 24–25.

⁶⁵ Hall, "The Images," pp. 5–7.

resemblances to the setting of *Guthlac A*: the exiled woman is in a cave *on wuda bearwe* with hellish connotations; Guthlac ascends a mound *on bearwe*, in which exiled demons live. Moreover, the speaker's surroundings in *The Wife's Lament* include *burgtunas*. *Tun*'s older meaning in English was 'enclosure', which seems more likely here than its later sense 'estate'. *Burg* normally means 'defended place, town', but imagining the speaker of *The Wife's Lament* to be surrounded by abandoned towns or fortresses seems rather improbable, and the term has accordingly occasioned much debate.⁶⁶ As I have discussed elsewhere, however, *burg* was in the late West Saxon dialect of the Exeter Book scribe often confused with *beorg*—as elsewhere in the Exeter Book in Riddle 27.⁶⁷ *Burgtunas* thus may be taken to mean 'mound-enclosures' (line 31), in which case the *eorðscraef* from which the protagonist of *The Wife's Lament* speaks is in a *beorg*.⁶⁸ This meaning seems to me to make better sense than previous suggestions and correlates neatly with another analogue to *The Wife's Lament*, the right-hand panel of the eighth-century Franks Casket, first adduced by Fiona and Richard Gameson.⁶⁹ The runic inscription on

⁶⁶ Surveyed by P.R. Orton, "The Wife's Lament and *Skírnismál*," in *Úr Döllum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn (Leeds, 1989), p. 212.

⁶⁷ Hall, "The Images," p. 7. Another example, I suggest, is the use of *burgsæl*—ostensibly 'fortress-hall'—of Guthlac's home in *Guthlac B*, lines 1284 and 1331; which hitherto has also caused critics discomfort: see *The Guthlac Poems*, p. 57.

⁶⁸ This being so, one wonders if the *beorgtunas* might have involved hedges. The statement that the *burgtunas* are *brerum beweaxne* is unique in Old English poetry; it has usually been interpreted to mean 'overgrown with briars', implying that the place is neglected and overgrown, the *bitre burgtunas* accordingly being understood with *biter* in the well-attested sense of 'bitter, full of grief' (see Hall, "The Images," pp. 5–6, as an example of this reading). But *beweaxan* and *brer* are rare in Old English. *Beweaxan* is as well-attested to mean 'grow around, grow so as to surround' as to mean 'grow over', while Middle English evidence, alongside the Old Irish loan of *brer* as *briar* 'pin, brooch(-pin)', supplements Old English hints that *brer* primarily meant 'any plant that bears prickles or thorns' (*Dictionary of Old English*, s.vv. *be-weaxan*, *brēr*; *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn, Robert E. Lewis [Ann Arbor, 1952–2001], <<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec/>> [accessed 4 March 2005], s.v. *brēr*; Colmán Etchingham and Catherine N. Swift, "English and Pictish Terms for Brooch in an Eighth-Century Irish Law-Text," *Medieval Archaeology* 48 [2004], 34–35). Taking *biter* in its sense 'sharp' (in which it is used, for example, of knives), *bitre burgtunas brerum beweaxne* might be interpreted better as 'sharp mound-enclosures, topped/surrounded with thorny plants'.

⁶⁹ Fiona Gameson and Richard Gameson, "Wulf and Eadwacer, *The Wife's Lament*, and the Discovery of the Individual in Old English Verse," in *Studies in English Language and Literature: Papers in Honour of E.G. Stanley*, ed. M.J. Toswell and E.M. Tyler (London, 1996), p. 466.

this panel describes a woman in exile “*on harmberga*”.⁷⁰ This has generally been understood to mean ‘on a grief-mound’, but I have argued on the basis of the image carved on the panel that the woman is ‘in a grief-mound’. Both this image and a further runic inscription on the panel seem to situate this mound in a *wudu*.⁷¹ These connections point to an Anglo-Saxon literary topos, in existence by the time when *Guthlac A* was composed, in which an exiled woman is situated in a mound, in a grove. That this putative topos was traditional is hinted by the occurrence of similar depictions in Old Icelandic poetry.⁷²

Another hint that there was an Anglo-Saxon poetic topos of banishment to a *beorg* is afforded by the thirteen-line metrical charm, *Against a Wen*, added in a late eleventh-century hand to a tenth-century manuscript containing Latin commentaries on the Psalms and Numbers.⁷³ Its first seven lines run:

Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne,
her ne scealt þu timbrien, ne nenne
tun habben,
ac þu scealt north eonene to þan
nihgan berhge,
þer þu hauest, ermig, enne broþer.
He þe sceal legge leaf et heafde.
Under fot uolmes, under ueþer earnes,
under earnes clea, a þu geweornie.

Pimple, pimple, pimple-chick,
you mustn't build here, nor have
any estate, and you must go away
to the nearby *beorg*: there you have,
wretch, a brother. He shall lay a
leaf at your head. Under the food
of the wolf [reading *uolues*], under
the feather of the eagle, under the
eagle's claw, may you dwell for ever
more.

The charm concludes by commanding the *wen* to diminish to nothing, by means of a series of comparisons to ever smaller things. There are various problems of interpretation here.⁷⁴ The reference to the *wenchichenne* has caused some consternation, but probably because *chichen* here has been understood as ‘chicken’, whereas in fact it denoted chicks (of all birds, although mainly of chickens): the point is, therefore, that the *wen* being addressed, already diminutive, is characterised as no more than a child of a pimple.⁷⁵ This curse is surely humorous to at least a degree: its dramatic invocation of the *wen* is bathetic; the image of

⁷⁰ ASPR 6:116.

⁷¹ Hall, “The Images,” pp. 2–3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 9–11.

⁷³ London, British Library, Royal 4 A. xiv; ASPR 6:128.

⁷⁴ For a survey and references, see M.L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 156.

⁷⁵ *Dictionary of Old English*, s.v. *cicēn*; *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *chiken*.

the *wenchichenne* derisory; and the aside, following from the mention of the *berhge*, that “*þer þu hauest, ermig, enne broþer*” presumably draws a familial connection between *wen* and *mound*, which if so is comically unfavourable to the smaller party. Even so, the charm is predicated on banishing something to a *beorg*. There is also a hint that at the mound, the “*wenne*” is to sit beneath a tree, as must the banished woman in *The Wife’s Lament*, since its brother (presumably the mound) is to lay a leaf at its head. This leaf has caused some perplexity and is, naturally, open to other interpretations: connecting this text with *The Wife’s Lament* may afford an explanation. Either way, *Against a Wen* affords some support for the existence of a topos shared with *The Wife’s Lament* and the right-hand panel of the Franks Casket.

Admittedly, *Guthlac A* does not situate an oak tree on top of Guthlac’s *beorg*. Since no tree is apparent on the *harmberg* depicted on the Franks Casket, this is not a cause for concern. However, it is worth noting that when Guthlac first assaulted the *beorg*, according to lines 176–81,

eadig oretta ondwiges heard gyrede hine georne mid gæstlicum wæpnum wong bletsade him to ætstalle ærest arærde cristes rode þær se cempa oferwon freccessa fela	the blessed warrior, stern in resistance, prepared himself eagerly with spiritual weapons, blessed the plain as a ?station for himself; he first raised the cross of Christ, where that warrior overcame many terrors.
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Particularly as roods were often conceived metaphorically as trees in Anglo-Saxon discourse, Guthlac’s raising of a cross would paradoxically serve to increase the similarity between the *beorg on bearwe* and the lonely situation depicted in *The Wife’s Lament*.⁷⁶

If *Guthlac A*’s audience perceived in Guthlac’s situation resonances with texts like *The Wife’s Lament*, then a contrast was available to them like that between the exile suffered by such traditional figures as Widsith in *Widsith* and the voluntary, eremitic exile depicted in *The Seafarer*.⁷⁷ The speaker of *The Wife’s Lament* is confined to a place of misery, from which she cannot escape and which can, moreover, be read—like *Beowulf* and the right-hand panel of the Franks Casket—to hold up

⁷⁶ Jane Roberts and Christian Kay with Lynne Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 2000), <<http://libra.englant.arts.gla.ac.uk/othesaurus>> (accessed 11 April 2006), section 16.02.05.11, ‘The Cross (As Christian Image)’.

⁷⁷ ASPR 3:149–53 (*Widsith*); 143–47 (*The Seafarer*).

a dystopian image of the pagan past for contrast with the Christian present.⁷⁸ Guthlac, however, chooses to enter a similar situation, and, through his Christian faith, has the power not only to maintain his equanimity, but to transform his circumstances.

This reading can be taken a step further if, in *The Wife's Lament*, the mound in the grove is a pagan sacred place. Arguably, the poem's speaker declares that she was commanded to "*herh-earð niman*" ("take up a dwelling at a *hearg*-place"), *hearg* being the usual Old English word for a pagan sacred site, etymologically and in place-names denoting hills and rocky outcrops, but the word-division here is disputed and other readings are available.⁷⁹ If we do have a *hearg* here, it would be consistent with the remote setting of *Guthlac A* in that David Wilson found that Anglo-Saxon place-names containing *hearg* tend to be situated several miles from known early routeways, by contrast with the other major type of pagan site identifiable by place-names, those containing *weoh*, which were usually close to them.⁸⁰ As with readings of *Guthlac A's* *beorg on bearwe* as a pagan holy place, one of the reasons why *hearg* has not always been accepted in *The Wife's Lament* is doubtless a discomfort with paganizing readings of Old English poetry. But as I have said, it is evident that Anglo-Saxons circulated vernacular texts concerning their pagan past and (implicitly) its meaning in their Christian present: it is not inherently implausible, then, that *The Wife's Lament's* topos concerned pagan sacred places.

Some support for this reading can be gained from the correlation of the scene in *The Wife's Lament* with the archaeological, toponymic and textual evidence adduced by John Blair for late pagan Anglo-Saxon ritual sites. Blair argued that around the time of the conversion—when traditional Anglo-Saxon ritual life came under acute pressure to compete with Christian practises—Anglo-Saxons adopted earlier British traditions of monumental building. The most consistent aspect of this which he discovered was the reuse and building of square enclosures, whose purpose was clearly not purely functional. Blair found that "a high proportion of these enclosures were superimposed on prehistoric

⁷⁸ Besides Hall, "The Images," see especially Niles, "The Problem," esp. pp. 1111–12, and Leslie Webster, "The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket," in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 243–44.

⁷⁹ For a full discussion, see Orton, "*The Wife's Lament*," p. 209.

⁸⁰ David Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London, 1992), p. 10.

monuments, normally Bronze Age barrows,” and also that they often had an orthostat, or sometimes, it would appear, a tree, on top of them.⁸¹ Noting the reading of *burgtunas* as ‘mound-enclosures’, and the presence of an oak tree on top of the *eorðscraef* in which the speaker of *The Wife’s Lament* wanders, we may consider the unusual scene of *The Wife’s Lament* to correlate precisely with our archaeological evidence for late pagan Anglo-Saxon ritual sites. Conceivably, *The Wife’s Lament*, and more certainly *Guthlac A*, derive from a time when such sites were fresh in the Anglo-Saxon cultural memory, but this inference is not necessary to my reading. The literary topos and its meaning could have existed independently of actual practice, and would have been encouraged by the biblical association of pagan shrines with mounds and oaks, most prominently in Ezekiel 6:13.

If the landscape of *The Wife’s Lament* can indeed be understood as a recognizable portrayal of a pagan ritual site, then it might not be an unreasonable stretch to read *Guthlac A* not only to contrast Guthlac with traditional figures in similar places and circumstances, but to add him implicitly to the range of saints who destroyed pagan holy places. If so, then the emphasis which *Guthlac A* places on Guthlac’s conversion from diabolically-inspired warrior to Christian hermit is implicitly extended to his hermitage: it is not simply a place beyond the rule of men, inhabited by demons, but specifically a place of pagan worship, turned to a place of Christian worship. This reading admittedly prompts the question that if the conversion of a pagan holy place works so well in *Guthlac A*, then why is it not made explicit? One reasonable response would be that whatever the *Guthlac A*-poet’s sources were, they did not actually attest that Guthlac had converted a pagan holy place—certainly the *Vita Guthlaci* does not. The poet did not wish to make—or could not get away with making—a claim which was known to be false; but by emphasizing certain features of Guthlac’s landscape, he was able to connote the conversion of a pagan holy place, and to bring something of the power of that portrayal to his poem.

⁸¹ John Blair, “Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines and their Prototypes,” *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 8 (1995), pp. 2–3.

Conclusions

By writing a saint's life in traditional English verse, the *Guthlac A*-poet was by definition entering a discourse characterized by tension between older and newer models of behaviour. I have argued, however, that he rose to this challenge more directly than has been realized. In portraying Guthlac as a holy hero, he both utilized and subverted traditional models of heroic behaviour, attested for us by *Beowulf* and its Old Icelandic analogues. Unlike Felix, who struggled to reconcile Guthlac's youth as a warrior with his sanctity, the *Guthlac A*-poet identified a motif common in traditional narratives, of the unpromising youth, and used it to delineate a dramatic conversion in Guthlac's life. This helped to make *Guthlac A* a text about *becoming* an ideal Christian rather than about *being* an ideal Christian, and it helped to establish Guthlac himself as a patron and psychopomp through whose assistance people might achieve the same conversions as he did. But rather than having the unpromising youth gain renown as a warrior, *Guthlac A* inverted the motif by having him renounce it. Likewise, the *Guthlac A*-poet seems to have adopted and subverted the idea that a hero should establish his reputation by breaking into a burial mound, defeating its supernatural inhabitant in combat, and winning treasure: Guthlac indeed breaks into a burial mound, in a fashion which is much more belligerent than the establishment of his hermitage in Felix's *Vita*, but explicitly refuses to fight like a traditional hero. He also eschews treasure-hunting: in *Guthlac A*, the hero's motivation is rather God's directive that he should rid the mound of its demonic inhabitants. *Guthlac A*'s approach here can be seen as a precise counterpart to *Beowulf*'s dragon-fight, where a traditional hero is arguably implicitly contrasted with dragon-fighting saints; in each case, the spiritual method of monster-fighting is shown to be superior to the heroic. It may also be that the mound where Guthlac faces the demons is intended to recall (poetic representations of) pagan ritual sites, in which case Guthlac is not merely chasing demons from the landscape, but implicitly converting a site from pagan worship to Christian. Either way, however, *Guthlac A*'s landscape recalls that of *The Wife's Lament*. Once more, the comparison favours Guthlac: he is commanded by God to go to the *beorg on bearwe* as the speaker of *The Wife's Lament* is commanded by her *hlaford* ('husband', but also 'lord') to dwell in a cave (arguably within a *beorg*) *on bearwe*. But whereas the protagonist of *The Wife's Lament* can do little more than bemoan her

misfortune, Guthlac, through his Christian faith, has the power to amend his situation.

If this reading of *Guthlac A* is accepted, then a new shaft of light falls on Anglo-Saxon discourses of sanctity, arguably of the eighth century. *Guthlac A*'s concern with the improvement of individual Christians, which has long been noted, can be read to have been embedded in a discourse which responded directly to the tension between Christian and traditional ideals of behaviour, a tension which has been inferred between the lines of Latin texts (as in Bede's silence concerning Saint Wilfrid), but which has rarely been identified as the subject of allusions within a text. It gives us a glimpse of vernacular discourses in which Anglo-Saxons were prepared partly to assimilate saints to traditional, non-Christian paradigms of behaviour, but also to engage with those paradigms to show how Christian, saintly behaviour was eminently more powerful.

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